Spring 1999

Factors Which Contribute to Successful Schools for Disadvantaged Students: An Exploratory Case Study of Two Urban Elementary Schools in Norfolk, Virginia

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FACTORS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF TWO URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

By

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
URBAN SERVICES-MANAGEMENT
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
April 1999

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

FACTORS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF TWO URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

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This exploratory case study examines the perceptions of parents, teachers, students and principals on eight factors of school effectiveness. Two low income elementary schools in the City of Norfolk, Virginia served as the research setting for this study. Though both schools consist almost entirely of African American students, and are otherwise similar in demographics, they have achieved at different levels. While one has been recognized as a national model, based on continuous improvement in students' academic achievement, the other has not attained the same level of achievement, based on standardized test scores.

A case study methodology has been used to provide an understanding of the perceptions of individuals in these two schools. The goal has been to account for differences between the two schools, and determine why one has been more successful as a leading institution than the other. Focus groups have served as the means of obtaining and assessing data relative to the thoughts and perceptions of parents, teachers, and students. In addition, the principals of the two schools were interviewed, leading to a total of 79 respondents.

The research questions, as well as the focus group and interview questions were based on eight "correlates of school effectiveness." These correlates have been

nationally recognized, and accepted as factors which are likely to influence the learning environment. As such, they have also served as the key variables in this study. Analysis of the data was conducted through a careful examination of trends and patterns which emerged from the data.

Findings in this study confirm that the following characteristics are likely to result in a high achieving school: strong parental involvement, strong school leadership, high teacher expectations, a safe and orderly environment, time on task and opportunity to learn, monitoring, school mission, and resources. Though findings are limited to the two schools that have been studied, results also point to the importance of holistic approaches. This includes bringing the entire community together to create a caring school community for students and parents from disadvantaged backgrounds. Finally, results also highlighted the importance of student self esteem, flexibility, commitment, and group efficacy.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents

Talley Simpson Sanders and MaeBell Sutton Sanders;

to my husband,

Robert L. Sawyer, Sr.,

and to Yalanda

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As always, first and foremost thanks go to God who is sovereign over all things. Sincere appreciation goes to Dr. Leonard Ruchelman, Dr. Gail Johnson, Dr. Jack Robinson, and Dr. Wolfgang Pindur. I am eternally grateful for their support, patience and encouragement.

This study would not have been possible without the support of Dr. Aaron Gay and many of the parents, teachers, students and principals in the Norfolk Public School System. To these persons, I am also grateful.

A special thanks to those classmates who have not only provided encouragement, but have become life long friends.

Last, but certainly not least, a special thanks to my wonderful and supportive family!

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Statement of the Problem

Despite the problems faced by the majority of schools attended by poor and disadvantaged students, there are some low income schools that are effective. Clark (1980) refers to these as "maverick" or "outlier" schools where low income students perform at high achievement levels.

Researchers of the educational process have consistently identified a number of factors which are related to improved school achievement. These factors, which have come to be known as the "correlates of school effectiveness," are believed to distinguish effective schools from those that are less effective. Included in these factors are the following eight "correlates": strong parental involvement; school leadership; high teacher expectations of students; time on task and opportunity to learn; frequent monitoring of student progress; a safe and orderly environment which is conducive to learning; a clear school mission, and resources (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Holdaway, 1997; Bacon and Evers, 1994; Brookover, 1979; Edmonds, 1978). In studies which distinguish between high and low achieving schools, these factors have produced results which have been statistically significant for each component (Evers and Bacon, 1994; Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

In conjunction with available effectiveness criteria, there is a need to explore the specific characteristics of successful schools. For example, Bullard and Taylor (1993) express the need for understanding how these schools work, the people who make them work, and why. Meier (1997:194) states that "good schools are filled with particulars which

explain their surprising successes, and that every school must have the power and the responsibility to design their own particulars."

Case studies of schools with clearly higher achievement than comparable schools have been valuable in identifying contextual differences and characteristics that are related to effectiveness (Levine and Lezotte, 1990). Such studies have served to differentiate patterns between schools which are high and low in achievement. This has been done by focusing on the learning environments of economically poor students, and the conditions of learning that enable quality academic outcomes (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Henderson, et al., 1997).

The importance of understanding differences between high and low achieving schools for minority students can be justified by the following reasons: 1) The literature on education describes the typical urban low income school as troubled places where poor and disadvantaged students are failing in school. Students in these schools are, reportedly, scoring as much as 30 points lower than white students on standardized achievement tests (Clark, 1980; Darling-Hammond, 1991; Squires, Huitt, Segar, 1996; Holdaway, 1997; Glass, 1997; Abrams, 1997). 2) The literature also indicates that "poverty" correlates more highly with failure in school than any other characteristic (Blackman and Lavely, 1991; Smrekar, 1994; Ebel, 1982). 3) The literature projects that for the next school generation, twenty five percent of the children who come to U.S. schools will be poor (Peters, Schubeck and Hopkins, 1995; Herndon, 1989; Steele, 1992). 4) Legal and demographic trends indicate the general failure of desegregation and other efforts to equalize the quality of schooling (Henderson, et al., 1996). 5) Demographic trends project that most poor African American

students will continue to attend schools that are predominantly African American (Henderson et al., 1996).

Urban Significance

The public school system of Norfolk, Virginia provides the research setting for this study. In Norfolk, sixty-four percent of the 36,000 student population is black. Most of these students are concentrated in inner city neighborhoods, and are poor enough to qualify for free or reduced lunches. Approximately half attend predominantly black neighborhood and community schools (Glass, 1996). The high percentage and concentration of children from these families have created educational problems in the schools. Test scores of the students in the black community schools lag behind the scores of students in the racially mixed schools (Glass, 1996).

The totality of these problems has created several negative conditions which have adversely affected the city as well as the school system. Bradbury et al. (1982) indicate that "although poor children can be taught effectively, their concentration in certain schools often causes teachers and staff to have low expectations of them. Such isolation can be harmful, both to poor students, and white students, as well, by creating an unchallenging school environment. In fact, evidence suggests that a high concentration of minority children often causes withdrawal of white (and frequently more affluent) children to suburban or private schools."

Historical Background

The 1954 case of "Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka," serves as the legal back drop to the present analysis. The significance of "Brown" is that it was intended to

achieve racial balance and equal rights for minority students. Black parents who had initiated the four cases in four different states felt that racial segregation in public schools meant racial inferiority and unequal educational opportunity (Amaker, 1988). Other arguments included that segregated schools lowered the self esteem of black students. It was felt that segregation of white and black students had a detrimental effect on black students which affected their motivation to learn (Franklin and Anderson, 1978). The Supreme Court agreed, and declared that separate education facilities were unequal.

In response to the Brown case, the City of Norfolk reportedly spent more time and money "resisting" desegregation than efforts to implement it. Cason (1991) featured an article on White (1991) who reported that "although leaders in Norfolk were aware of the legal precedent of the Brown decision, Norfolk built several public housing communities and four new schools just for blacks." The purpose was to avoid desegregation by bringing the schools of blacks up to the standard of white schools. White further suggested that the city used its powers of planning, development and redevelopment to forestall desegregation. Highways and public buildings were built to separate neighborhoods and create dividing lines between black and white neighborhoods.

The Ledger Star News (editorial, September 27, 1958) reported that the City of Norfolk finally agreed to comply with federal mandates, which indicated that students would be enrolled in white or black schools without regard to race. However, the School Board used a program of tests and interviews to reject all 151 applications made by Negro children seeking to enter white schools.

Over a period of time, the pupil placement plan which the City used to reject the Negro children was ruled unconstitutional. At that point, however, the school board "delayed" the opening of schools to further avoid integration. Six of Norfolk's all white secondary schools were closed under massive resistance to integration. While the all-Negro institutions operated with state assistance, approximately 10,000 white students in grades seven through twelve were shut out of school from September 1958 to February 1959. Finally, according the Ledger Star News (12/31/59), the Supreme Court of Virginia ruled that school closings were illegal, and the school board reluctantly agreed to admit 17 Negroes.

As such, school desegregation in Norfolk officially began in February 1959, when seventeen black students were admitted into white schools. To be noted, however, the neighborhoods in Norfolk were not racially mixed to any significant degree. The result was that neighborhood segregation severely hindered efforts to integrate schools in Norfolk, as well as in other urban areas throughout the country. While many white students lived in the suburbs, black students predominantly lived in the inner city areas. Poverty and unemployment rates were high, and drugs and violent crimes were commonplace.

The "busing" of students across cities and towns was seen as the alternative to achieve school integration. In Norfolk, as well as in other parts of the country, busing was seen as the remedy which would fully desegregate public schools. The intent was to give black students more access to better schools which would improve their academic performance. School districts throughout the country were mandated to hand down racial percentages for

schools to meet. In some districts, it was declared that no school's enrollment could be more than 50 percent nonwhite (Amaker, 1988).

Busing, like desegregation, became a very controversial issue. Many people felt that involuntary busing would not advance the overriding goal of equal educational opportunity. Despite such feelings, however, black students predominantly were bused into white neighborhood schools to achieve racial balance.

The Norfolk School Board initiated plans to begin its court ordered busing of students throughout the City in 1972. Almost immediately, however, "white flight," posed a serious problem in the City. Glass (1996) reported that from 1970 to 1990, there was a 31 percent decrease in the population of whites in the City of Norfolk (see Table One). During the same period, the population of blacks, Asian and Hispanics continued to increase. Overall, however, during the period from 1970 to 1990, there was a 15 percent drop in Norfolk's total population.

Glass further indicated that during the same period, the city and school officials hoped to reverse white flight by ending cross-town busing. However, from 1969 to 1981, about 19,000 white students abandoned the city's schools. Table Two shows that from 1970 to 1996, white enrollment of students dropped approximately 62 percent, and there was a 33 percent drop in Norfolk's student body population overall.

Table One

Norfolk's Population by Race

Race	1970	1980	1990	Change since 1970
White	215,069	162,300	148,228	-31%
Black	87,261	93,987	102,012	+17
Other*	5,621	10,692	10,989	+95
Total	307,951	266,979	261,229	-15

Source: U.S. Census, Norfolk Planning Department, the Virginian Pilot News, 1996.
*Other includes mostly Asian and Hispanic.

Table Two

"White flight" had a dramatic and lasting impact on the racial mix of students- Norfolk's change in race of children in public schools

Race	1970	1980	1990	1996	Change since 1970
White	30,246	14,249	12,283	11,388	-62%
Black	24,425	18,009	18,044	23,202	-5
Other*	N/A	N/A	1,360	2,126	N/A
Total	54,671	32,258	31,687	36,716	-33

Source: Norfolk Public Schools.
*Other includes Asian and Hispanic

The Creation of Norfolk's Ten Black Community Schools: Based on arguments that the system had become unified, the School Board drew on a 1975 court-ordered plan to abandon the forced busing plan for desegregation in its 35 elementary schools. In essence, although desegregation was hampered by "white flight," and neighborhoods that were not racially mixed, the City of Norfolk had put forth good efforts to desegregate its public schools. As such, both the Department of Justice and the Supreme Court upheld the decision to abandon the forced busing plan (Amaker, 1988).

The Norfolk School System was allowed to return to a neighborhood plan that would leave ten elementary schools more than 95 percent black and six elementary schools at least 70 per cent white (Amaker, 1988). These ten predominantly black low income neighborhood schools were referred to as "community schools." To ensure equal access, the School Board agreed to allocate more resources - as much as $1000 more per pupil - to the black schools so that the black children's education would not suffer as a result of the change in policy. Efforts were made to encourage parental and community involvement, a caring environment, and a well-balanced curriculum (Glass, 1996).

The Norfolk School System was the first school district in the country to successfully challenge busing as a means to create racial balances in schools. Glass (10/27/96) reported that "When the city ended elementary busing for desegregation in 1986, it was the country's first school district to win approval to dismantle court-ordered busing plans of the 1960s and 1970s . . . " This decision was monumental for Norfolk, which is the fifth largest public school district in Virginia, where African Americans and low income youth make up nearly two thirds of the city's 35,000 public school children.

Throughout the nation, the decision in Norfolk represented a victory for anti-busing groups who did not want their children transferred across the city to achieve racial balances in schools (Glass, 1996). The result, however, has been that despite massive efforts to integrate schools since the 1950s, numerous schools throughout the country have continued to be segregated.

The Academic Achievement of Black Students in the Community Schools

Glass (1996) reports that "Although the Norfolk School Board won the battle to end busing, its efforts to improve the academic achievement of minority students have continued to be a struggle. Actually, the Harvard Project on School desegregation, a research group based at Harvard University concluded that Norfolk's return to community schools was a failure. These conclusions were based on the fact that after more than ten years (since the return to community schools), results of the 1996 national standardized Iowa Tests of Basic Skills show that student achievement in Norfolk's community schools has not improved (Glass, 1996)."

Important also is that students at the black community schools were behind blacks of the same social class in the racially mixed schools. Table Three shows that on the 1996 IOWA test of Basic Skills, 51 percent of poor black fourth-grade students at the racially mixed schools read at or above grade level. This was in comparison to 42 percent of the students at the black community schools. Table three also shows that in the poor black community schools, there were 539 test takers in 1996 (compared to 913 poor black students in the mixed schools). Of importance is that the 42 percent average reading score in the black community schools included scores from students at the high achieving

Table Three

The percentage of low-income black fourth-graders in the city elementary schools reading at or above grade level based on the 1996 Iowa Test of Basic Skills

1996 Reading Scores			
Black Community Schools		**Low Income Black Students in the 25 other Neighborhood Schools**	
Number of test takers	539	Number of test takers	913
Number at/above grade level	228	Number at/above grade level	472
Percentage at/above grade level	42%	Percentage at/above grade level	51%

Source: the Virginian Pilot News, 1996.

Note: Minus the 54 test takers at this study's high achieving school, 52 of whom scored at or above grade level, the percentage of community school fourth-grade black students at or above grade level drops to 36 percent.

school. In the high achieving school, 52 percent of the students scored at or above grade level. As such, when the scores at the high achieving school are controlled for (in order to observe the scores at the other low income schools), only 36 percent of students in the community schools school scored at or above grade level (Glass, 1996).

Table Four shows that in 1996 the average reading comprehension score for the 10 black community schools ranked in the 33rd percentile. The other 25 mixed schools (which included all other elementary schools in the City of Norfolk with the exception of the ten black community schools) ranked in the 50th percentile which is the nation's average. In mathematics, in 1996, the black schools scored in the 43rd percentile. The other schools ranked in the 62nd percentile (Glass, 1996; Gay, 1996). Table four also shows that these figures represent the highest scores for the black community schools for a three-year period (to include the years 1994 through 1996). Citywide, 84 percent of white middle-class, and 75 percent of poor, white fourth-graders were reading at or above grade level. Sixty-nine percent of black middle-class fourth-graders were at or above grade level. (It should be noted that in 1997, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills was replaced with the Stanford 9 Achievement Test. Due to this recent change, the 1997/1998 scores are not reported in this study).

School officials in Norfolk have contended that community schools are not to blame, and that low-income black students as a group typically perform poorly in schools. These same officials readily admit that raising achievement among low income students has been tough, and they have not yet found the secret to successfully educating these

students in spite of many noteworthy attempts (Glass, 1996).

It should be noted that the school system has undertaken some major projects in hopes of raising performance. For example, in an effort to voluntarily integrate the community schools, the first magnet elementary school was opened in 1996 at a 97 percent black school. The magnet school placed special emphasis on academic achievement and on particular fields such as science. Within the year, the school had attracted a 21 percent white population of students. Other initiatives include pre-school programs where 1200 youngsters are being served, and mandatory summer school and automatic retention of third-graders who read below grade level (Glass, 1996).

The High Achieving School:

There have been numerous efforts to improve academic achievement in all of Norfolk's black community schools. This study's high achieving school, however, represents the only one which has met or exceeded the national average on standardized achievement tests. Over the past few years, fourth graders at the high achieving school have scored highest in the city on some sections of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. While the other black community schools have shown much less improvement over the ten-year period, the high achieving school has consistently scored in the fifty percentiles. The school has gained a solid reputation for being an "outstanding" elementary school in the nation. As such, there is a need to understand how and why the high achieving school has been able to succeed while similar schools have continued to struggle.

Table Four

Fourth Grade Math and Reading Comprehension Scores: Students at the Black Community Schools

	Reading			Mathematics			
	1994	1995	1996	1994	1995	1996	$per pupil
High Achieving School (1)	**58**	**44**	**87**	**51**	**46**	**88**	**$4,889**
School (2)	29	31	37	33	42	59	$5,200
School (3)	24	22	20	39	29	21	4,845
School (4)	20	22	20	29	35	21	4,793
School (5)	28	23	19	42	39	34	4,949
School (6)	37	35	39	59	51	49	5,206
School (7)	19	27	28	31	38	37	5,649
School (8)	28	37	27	49	45	56	6,042
School (9)	23	34	23	38	41	30	5,156
School (10)	19	22	29	30	33	49	4,942
Black Community Schools Avg.	**28**	**30**	**33**	**40**	**40**	**43**	**5,200**
Racially mixed schools Avg.	**50**	**50**	**50**	**60**	**59**	**62**	**4,707**

With the exception of the high achieving school, the ten black community schools are randomly coded by numbers two through 10. The racially mixed schools include all other elementary schools with the exception of the black community schools. The 1997 and1998 scores are not included because they are from the Stanford 9 Achievement Test Results which replaced the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in 1997. Scores are given in percentiles, and the 50 percentile is the national average.
Source: Norfolk Public Schools.

The Significance of this Study:

To gain an understanding of what goes on in the high achieving school, this study compared the perceptions of individuals in the high achieving school to the perceptions of individuals in a lower achieving school. Both schools are similar in demographics. The purpose was to see if there would be particular patterns in the data which might account for differences between the schools.

Research indicates that the environments of some schools may contribute to serious problems suffered by students (Winfred,1990; Carlson 1964; Ascher, 1991). Scholars have argued that schools with lax policies, weak leadership, unsafe neighborhoods, unqualified or uncommitted staff, and inadequate resources, all reinforce the disadvantages of many students. In such environments, reform efforts would be difficult to implement. As such, there is a need to gain an understanding into the dynamics of the school environment. Of particular importance, are the perspectives of people who are key players in the school system (Meier, 1997; Kelly, 1996). It is important to better understand what goes on in schools, including their strengths and weaknesses. The present study attempts to add to findings regarding specific differences between high achieving schools and lower achieving schools.

To elaborate, Holdaway (1997) specifically focused on identifying effectiveness factors which are believed to influence learning in different school cultures. Similarly, Knapp (1995) indicated that since there continues to be serious problems in too many schools, additional research is needed for discerning how schools are able to implement reforms. Such efforts would require descriptions of schools based on the perceptions of

people who have first hand knowledge.

Philip G. Altbach, et al., (1997) discussed the need to break the barriers between research and practices in education. These authors further emphasized the need to focus more on the thoughts and writings of people who work in the schools. The purpose, in part, would be to see if, and how, certain programs are being implemented, and the conditions which impact implementation.

Meir (1997), and Kelly (1996) suggested the need to increase constituent voices not only about the work of their own school, but also about other people's schools. In other words, the authors suggested we need to hear from the practitioners, who are involved in the day-to-day process of education. Additionally, the practitioners need to understand their actions and their impact in comparison to what is going on in other schools.

Research Objectives:

This study provides a comparative analysis of the perceptions of parents, students, teachers, and principals in two low income schools. The goal is to see if there are patterns in their perceptions which would account for differences between a high achieving and a lower achieving school. Information was obtained through open ended, focused questions which were based on the eight correlates of school effectiveness. Therefore, the objectives for this research were as follow:

1) To account for differences in the performance of students in a high achieving school as compared to students in a lower achieving school.

2) To determine the perceptions of key participants - teachers, parents, students, and principals - in exploring the dynamics of the educational process.

3) To assess the impact of specific practices and characteristics of school effectiveness.

The Research Questions:

Based on the previously stated research objectives, the following questions were devised to obtain information for this study. As this study examines the perceptions of participants on the correlates of effectiveness, the correlates also provide the basis for the research questions.

1. The first question asked, "To what extent is there variation in the perceptions of parent involvement at the two schools? What factors account for the differences?"

2. The second research question asked: " To what extent is there variation in perceptions regarding school leadership (i.e., leadership from the principal) at the two schools? What factors account for the differences?"

3. The third research questions asked: "To what extent are there differences in the perceptions of teacher expectations and requirement for high academic performance at the two schools? Are there specific factors which account for the differences?"

4. The fourth question asked: "To what extent are there differences in perceptions regarding a safe and orderly environment at the two schools?"

5. The fifth research question asked: "Are there differences in perceptions regarding the schools' mission?"

6. The sixth question asked: "Are the schools different in terms of perceptions regarding opportunities to learn, and time on task?"

7. The seventh research question asked: "Are the schools different in terms of perceptions regarding monitoring?"

8. The final research questions asked: "Are there differences in the schools in terms of perceptions regarding the amount of resources they receive?"

Methodology:

Case Study: This exploratory case study was conducted to gain an understanding of school effectiveness practices in two low income urban schools. There was a need to explore why two schools, which were similar in demographics have achieved at different levels.

Yin (1989) explained that case studies are appropriate when there is a need to create a special understanding of certain events. This is particularly the case when there is a desire to answer how and why questions about a situation. Consistent with Yin's descriptions, the contemporary problem in this study could be investigated in its real life context. There was opportunity to explore participants' feelings and perceptions at both schools regarding effectiveness factors. There was also opportunity to use multiple sources of data.

Kelly (1994), Bernard (1988), and Russell (1984) suggest similar methodology as a means of collecting data when there is a clear plan, and when the goal is to learn by allowing informants to express themselves in their own terms and at their own pace. Taylor and Bogman (1984) indicate that the actual number of cases is relatively unimportant; "what matters more in this type research is the potential of each case to aid the researcher in developing theoretical insights into the area of social life being studied."

Data Collection: Information to answer the research questions was obtained through focus groups and personal interviews. Krueger (1994) described focus groups as carefully planned discussions (based on open ended questions) designed to obtain

perceptions. Focus groups are used when there is a defined area of interest, and in a permissive, nonthreatening environment. Parents, teachers, and students participated in the focus groups. These participants were asked to share their perceptions on eight factors of school effectiveness. The principals' perceptions were obtained through face-to-face interviews. They were also asked to share their perceptions on the same eight factors of effectiveness.

Questionnaires: Questionnaires were developed in an effort to obtain information from participants. All questions were based on indicators of the correlates of school effectiveness. The questions, which were open ended and focused, were designed to draw different perceptions and points of views from participants. A listing of the questions, as well as the indicators for the correlates of effectiveness, is located in the appendix. From the focus group and interview data, the researcher looked for trends and patterns which might account for differences between the two schools.

Indicators: This study used indicators of the eight correlates of school effectiveness as the basis for all questions and interviews. The correlates of effectiveness have become the guiding principles for effective schools over the last 25 years. Based on substantive research, it is believed that these correlates of effectiveness influence the learning environment, as well as students' academic outcomes. As such, the correlates served as the independent variables for this study. The indicators were used in the analysis process as the standard to assess, and code, participant comments.

This study was strengthened with additional sources of qualitative and quantitative data. These sources were re-analyzed to corroborate the primary data sources. Included

in these sources were: student achievement data, profiles of school, staff, students and parents, and comparisons of school resources, attendance, and mobility. Survey and documentary data sources included a re-analysis of "A Needs Assessment Study" (based on factors of school effectiveness) which was previously conducted. Both the high achieving and comparison schools were involved in the "Needs Assessment Study." Quantitative data were used to examine student outcomes in key subject areas (reading, and mathematics) for both the study school and the comparison school.

Selection of Participants: Krueger (1994:14) indicates that the rule for selecting focus group participants is "commonality," not diversity. Participants should consist of people who share similar experiences. Because the intent of this study was to obtain perceptions from people in the schools, the participants included students, teachers, principals and parents.

Specifically, a total of 76 persons, which included participants from both schools, comprised nine focus groups. Additionally, there were three personal interviews. The personal interviews were conducted with the principal of each school, and the former principal of the high achieving school. The focus groups included teachers of fourth and fifth grade students, students from grades four and five only, and a representation of parents from both schools. In order to get a good mix of students in terms of gender and grade levels, a "purposive" sample was used. A purposive sample is generally used when there is a need for participants who possess certain characteristics. Student participation was also based on parental consent.

With the help of the parent coordinators from each school, attempts were made to

randomly select parents from a list of all parents within the schools. Responses from the random sample were low at both schools. As such, the study utilized a convenience sample (i.e., parents who were available on the day of the interviews). In both schools, the focus groups for parents were held immediately after a school-sponsored activity which involved parents. This was done to increase parental participation.

Analysis: Based on specific indicators of each correlate of effectiveness, analysis of the data was carried out through a careful examination of trends or patterns in the data which would account for differences in perceptions at the two schools. The procedures included the creation of qualitative displays. Displays were created for each group for better viewing and comparing the data between groups and among the groups. There was also emphasis on cross-checking participant accounts with the documentary data sources which were used. During the focus groups and interviews, efforts were made to clarify, as well as verify participant accounts. These methods were used to increase the reliability of the study, thus making sure participants accounts were represented accurately.

Conceptual Definitions:

Several terms have been defined in this study. These definitions were based on a review of the literature, and predominantly on the work of Bullard and Taylor (1993) and Levine and Lezotte (1990). These terms are described below:

1. At-Risk - Disadvantaged, low income or deprived students with socioeconomic challenges. These challenges include such factors as poverty, teen pregnancy, or other negative circumstances which place them at a disadvantage, and cause them not to achieve or meet academic goals.

2. Clear and Focused Mission: A clearly articulated mission which the staff shares as an understanding of, and a commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability.

3. Safe and Orderly Environment: An orderly, purposeful school atmosphere which is conducive to learning, and is free from threats of physical harm for students and staff.

4. High Expectations: A climate of expectation in which the staff believes and demonstrates that students can attain mastery of basic skills and that they (the staff) have the capability to help students achieve such mastery.

5. Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task: The allocation of a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in basic skills areas. For a high percentage of that time, students are engaged in planned learning activities directly related to identified objectives.

6. School Leadership: The leader, who is usually the principal, who acts to effectively communicate the mission of the school to the staff, parents, and students, and who understands and applies the characteristics of school effectiveness in the management of programs for the school.

7. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress: The requirement of frequent feedback on student academic progress. Multiple assessment methods such as teacher-made tests, samples of students' work, mastery skills checklists, criterion-referenced tests, and norm-referenced tests are used. The results of testing are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program.

8. Parent and Community Involvement: The involvement of parents and community members in schools, who understand and support the school's basic mission. These persons are given opportunity to play an important role in helping the school achieve its mission.

9. Resources: Inputs in terms of people, money, authority, and materials to achieve the goals, missions and purpose of the organization.

10. Student Achievement Outcomes: Measurable student performance which occurs as a result of classroom learning. For the purpose of this study, student achievement outcomes were based on student scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

11. IOWA Test of Basic Skills (IOWA): Standardized achievement tests for grades three through eight. The tests are administered in group sessions and usually contain several short sub-tests that measure cognitive skills such as mathematical concepts, computational skills, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. The IOWA Test of Basic Skills, like many other standardized tests, is norm-referenced, so that each person's performance is placed in relation to others in order to get a "relative standing" of each person's performance.

12. Community/Neighborhood Schools: Schools which are attended predominantly by students who are located in the same socioeconomic neighborhoods.

Chapter II

A Review of the Literature

The Effective School Movement:

Since the 1970's, research on the effects of schooling for disadvantaged students has focused on identifying successful schools in at-risk areas. The intent has been to demonstrate that students' socioeconomic status, and family backgrounds do not set limits on achievement; rather, researchers sought to demonstrate how different school practices produce different results. The ultimate goal has been to identify conditions for desired outcomes and high quality schooling for all students (Brookover, 1979; Miskel and Hoy; 1982; Gross, 1983).

Researchers agree that learning in the home is extremely important. However, they adamantly differ with Coleman (1966) and Jencks (1972) who had concluded that family background and social environment accounted for more of the variation in achievement than differences among schools. Researchers argue that when failure is based on poverty, family background, or place of residence, schools must take proactive measures by setting specific goals for students to succeed.

Numerous authors agree that differences among schools are important. They also believe that effectiveness in schools could transcend socioeconomic traits such as poverty and race. Henderson, et al. (1996) suggested that there should be a focus on the school environment, the organizational features of schools, and the conditions of teaching and learning. Similarly, Montgomery and Ross (1994) suggested that the traditional structure of some public schools made it impossible to teach urban students. In many

schools, according to these authors, support networks were reported as being weak or nonexistent. The climates in schools were reported to be "as palpable as the weather." Whereas some schools were reported to be warm and friendly, others, reportedly, had cold and forebearing environments. Schools, according to some authors, had become little more than custodial institutions, overloaded with too many students who themselves were overloaded with too many problems (Clark, 1980).

To counter negative problems in schools, researchers were inclined to describe numerous factors that would enhance the school environment. The criteria used to assess the effectiveness of educational organizations has come to be known as the correlates of effective schools. An effective school was defined as one in which essentially all students acquired the basic skills and knowledge they needed to succeed in schools (Bullard and Taylor, 1993; Brookover et al., 1977; Lezotte and Levine, 1990).

The literature indicates that the best-known correlates were those identified by Brookover, Edmonds, Lezotte, Frederickensen. These correlates were described as: 1) emphasis on student acquisition of basic skills; 2) high expectations for students; 3) strong administrative leadership; 4) frequent monitoring of student progress, and 5) an orderly climate conducive to learning (Bullard and Taylor, 1993; Levine and Lezotte, 1990).

Bullard and Taylor (1993), and Levine and Lezotte (1990) describe expanded sets of correlates which have since been utilized by various other researchers. These include: 1) clear and focused mission; 2) safe and orderly environment; 3) instructional leadership; 4) high expectations; 5) opportunity to learn and student time on task; 6) frequent monitoring of student progress; and 7) parental involvement which lead to positive home school

relations.

One of the first studies to specifically target schools that were successful in teaching children from low-income families was conducted by Brookover, et al. (1973). Brookover, et al. set out to find low income inner city schools that were achieving significantly above comparable schools. His intent was to study the characteristics of successful, low income schools.

Eight effective low income schools were found. Brookover found that what successful schools had in common were the following characteristics: strong leaders who formed a consensus and shared values about a common school mission; the staff and administrator who established a climate of high expectations and believed that their students could achieve at high levels; classrooms that had a purposeful atmosphere and not an oppressive atmosphere; frequent monitoring of student progress; teachers who accepted total responsibility for seeing that their students' potential for high achievement became a reality.

Numerous researchers, according to the literature, conducted similar research on effective schools (Austin, 1978, Rutter, 1979, Edmonds, 1978). These authors had findings similar to those of Brookover. They found that specific characteristics were commonly found in highly effective schools that did not appear to be present in schools which were not achieving as well.

Bullard and Taylor (1993) cited authors who found that things that made a difference included: innovative programs; strategies specifically designed for learning in students from diverse backgrounds; and teachers, and other staff members who were

committed to rousing a zest for learning in these students. For example, Stewart (1978) and Kellaghan, et al. (1983), found a positive relationship between student achievement and factors such as climate, atmosphere and other processes in schools. Speer (1995), and Bainbridge (1991) found importance in such factors as the amount of attention disadvantaged children receive, high expectations, and an understanding of the rewards which education brings.

The late Ron Edmonds, of Michigan State University, was a leading researcher in developing the common characteristics of effective schools. In his 1979 publication entitled "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor," Edmonds found differences to be based on such characteristics as strong leadership, monitoring and assessment. Other characteristics which were found to be important were supportive teachers and principals who believed all students can learn, and teachers who have specific goals, high expectations, and are task oriented.

Since the 1970's, and throughout the 1990s, effective school research has continued to be a topic of importance to researchers. In a 1990 study, 22 elementary school principals who had received national recognition for educating low-income students were brought together. The purpose was to identify the critical elements in the success of their schools. Ten common elements were identified as critical to turn a failing school into an effective one: 1) high expectations; 2) clear vision; 3) strong leadership; 4) teamwork; 5) staff development; 6) a strong appropriate curriculum; 7) safe, clean, orderly environment for learning; 8) genuine accountability; 9) recognition and reward for excellence; and 10) strong community and parental support (Zimmerman, 1990).

Holdaway (1997) provided a detailed analytical and factor analysis approach to school effectiveness. He found that school effectiveness continues to be a significant topic for research. Holdaway reported that the criteria that most commonly relate to school effectiveness continue to include some of the original correlates of effectiveness from the 1970s. These include: effective leadership; academic emphasis; orderly atmosphere; autonomous management; a positive climate; clearly defined goals; sense of community; high expectations; cooperative, stable and consistent, and well-qualified staff; challenging, focused instruction, appropriate curricula; relationships with and support from parents and the community, and central office support. Other researchers have agreed that the characteristics of successful schools are generally consistent (Campbell and Ramey, 1995; Knapp, 1995; Hill, 1994; Hallinger, Bickman and Davis, 1996; Vacha and McLaughlin, 1992).

The more current issue relates to the importance of these correlates to school effectiveness. Numerous researchers have expressed the need to understand how, and if, these and other effectiveness criteria are used in schools. For example, Holdaway (1997) indicated that "the overall and present problem is to reduce the list, and focus on the importance of specific factors to school effectiveness." Similar thoughts were expressed by Levine and Lezotte (1990), and Bullard and Taylor (1993).

It should be noted, however, that several school effectiveness models and programs have been designed and implemented throughout the country. Most share some similarities with the correlates of effectiveness. Barnett and Ladd (1996) described three of the most prominent models of school reform for disadvantaged students. These

include: 1) Accelerated Schools, 2) Success for All, and 3) the School Development Program. Each program is based on the belief that educational achievement of poor and disadvantaged students can equal that of other students (Barnett and Ladd, 1996). Common characteristics of these models include: "a challenging curriculum and high expectations; a clear school vision of education to which staff, students, and parents are committed; staff development; a strong instructional leader with clear responsibility for reform; a planning, implementation, and evaluation cycle conducted by school leaders; increased attention to the needs of the individual students; instructional methods known to be highly effective, family support and parent involvement" (Barnett and Ladd, 1996).

The James Comer School Development Program began in New Haven, Connecticut more than 25 years ago. Comer, a child psychiatrist, sought to improve the educational experience of poor minority youth through supportive bonds among children, parents, and school staff to promote a positive school climate. Comer believed that children's experiences at home and in school deeply affect their psychosocial development, which, in turn, shapes their academic achievement. As such, there is a need to bridge the social and cultural gaps between home and school (Comer, 1988; Smey-Richman, 1990; Barnett, 1996).

One aspect of the Comer process is to review problems in open discussion in a no-fault atmosphere. The programs also focus on collaborative working relationships among principals, parents, teachers, community leaders, superintendents, and health care workers. Finally, all decisions must be reached by consensus rather than by decree. More than 250 schools (elementary through high schools) have implemented the Comer model.

Reportedly, many of these schools have been evaluated and judged to be successful based on improved social skills, and have raised educational achievement and attendance levels (Comer, 1988; Smey-Richman et al, 1990; Ladd, 1996).

Similar programs to restructure schools include Henry Levin's "Accelerated Schools" and Robert Slavin's "Success for All." These programs also utilize staff collaboration, parent involvement, and high expectations for students. Whereas the Comer Process focuses on school climates, Levin's program focuses on providing an enriched and accelerated curriculum for disadvantaged students. Slavin's program stresses cognitive practices that increase learning, based on the idea that given well-developed methods, teachers can succeed with virtually all children (Slavin, 1993; Smey-Richman 1990).

Success for All uses research-based preschool and kindergarten programs. It focuses on reading programs in grades one to three, one-to-one tutoring for low-achieving students, family support programs and other elements (Slavin, 1993). This program which began in 1986 was designed to ensure that every student in a high-poverty school would succeed in acquiring basic skills in the early grades. Success is defined by performance in reading at or near grade level by the third grade, maintaining this status through the end of the elementary grades, and avoiding retention or special education. Although the program continues to be relatively new, there have been very positive outcomes on a variety of measures, including attendance rates, and decline in retention. To date, Success for All exists in more than 31 schools in 12 states (Slavin, 1993; Ladd and Barnett, 1996).

Henry M. Levin founded Accelerated Schools in 1986. The program is based on the results of a five-year study of at-risk students. Levin felt that the traditional ways in which schools approach disadvantaged students could lead to deficits, low expectations and tedious, unimaginative instruction (Ladd and Barnett, 1996). In contrast, Accelerated Schools were designed to bring students' performance up to grade level by grade three. This was done by engaging them in active learning and emphasizing language development, high expectations, and relating learning to the students' cultures. Essential components of the Accelerated Schools program include: establishing a unity of purpose, a common vision among all members of the school community, shared decision making and consensus (Ladd and Barnett, 1996).

Through these studies and models, researchers have shown that schools are indeed different in their effects on students (Miskel and Hoy, 1983; Hans and Levine, 1970; Bradbury, 1982). Brookover (1977) concluded that schools can produce whatever behavior the school social system is designed to produce, including highly differentiated outcomes for different individuals, and academic failure for others.

Descriptive Review of the Correlates of Effectiveness: For the purpose of this study, the following section provides a descriptive overview of the correlates of school effectiveness. These correlates have been operationally defined through empirical research. They are used in school systems throughout the nation, and form the basis for the effective school process. These correlates include the following eight factors of school effectiveness: 1) Parental involvement; 2) School leadership; and 3) High Expectations for Student Achievement; 4) Time on Task and Opportunity to Learn; 5)

Monitoring of student progress, 6) Clear and Focused Mission; 7) Safe and Orderly Environment, and 8) Resources.

Parental Involvement Reynolds (1992) proposed that the definition of parental involvement should be holistic. Reynolds further indicated that parental involvement meant any interactions between a parent and a school that may contribute to the interest of the child. As such, parent involvement involves varied interactions which are considered essential to both schools and students.

Parental involvement is considered a complex factor. For example, there are many forms and varieties of parental involvement. Additionally, schools often find it difficult to get parents involved. In a 1992 study, teachers ranked the lack of parents' help and involvement as a serious hindrance in students' ability to learn (Licitra, 1992). Additionally, research indicates that parental involvement marks one of the major differences for effectiveness between low socioeconomic schools and high socioeconomic schools. Important also, is that some researchers have found parent involvement to be more powerful in its impact on student achievement than socioeconomic conditions (Hallinger and Murphy ,1986; Clark, et al, 1980).

Bennett (1996) cites numerous authors who concluded that the home learning environment had three times as large an effect on achievement than did socio-economic status. For example, Anderson (1997) quotes Eagle (1989) who presented an analysis of the "1980 High School and Beyond" data of 28,000 high school seniors. This data showed that when socioeconomic factors were controlled, only parent involvement during high school had a significant positive effect. In predominantly black elementary schools, gains

in achievement (after controlling for socioeconomic status) were greatest at schools with a high degree of "school community" integration. In these environments, parents were in and around the building fairly continuously.

Anderson (1997) quoted Susan Swap (1993) who linked family involvement in schools with such benefits as: increased student achievement and attainment, increased student self-esteem, fewer behavioral problems in school, and better school attendance. Swap also focused on the surprisingly minimal level of parental involvement in schools, and the barriers which hinder family involvement. These barriers, according to Swap, include: changing demographics of the families and children being served in the schools, the lack of school norms and culture that support partnerships; the lack of resources to support parent involvement; and the lack of information about how to start and maintain parental involvement programs.

Similarly, Henderson and Berla (1996) published a descriptive collection of sixty-six studies, longitudinal studies of the effects of comprehensive parental involvement programs. While these authors cited similar findings to those of Swap, they stressed that when schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life.

Vacha and McLauglin (1992) and Kerbow and Bernhardt (1993) found that one reason children of better educated parents succeed is that parents are actively involved in educating their children. Educated parents have the skills and information for successfully participating in the educational process. These authors cite other authors who have found that college educated parents know more about their children's performance in school.

They actively monitor their children's homework and provide help. These parents attend parent-teacher conferences, and provide a great deal of encouragement and motivation to their children.

In contrast, studies also show that schools cater more to college educated parents. Educated parents are the ones who are most likely to be encouraged to play an important role in helping the school achieve its mission (Licitra, 1992; Fuerst and Fuerst, 1993; Speer, 1994). Critical to this factor is that in successful schools, schools must work to create opportunities for all parents to participate regardless of their educational background. Parents of disadvantaged students are more likely to be poorly educated and may not understand the importance of learning. It is for these reasons that researchers stress the importance of the school's responsibility in empowering parents. This is done by keeping parents informed on educational programs, as well as informing them of their children's progress.

Anderson (199) used the work of Epstein (1988) to describe some of the models of parental involvement. These models included programs that focus on the home; i.e., health and safety, preparing children for school, teaching family life skills, creating positive home conditions that support the school, and teaching conduct behaviors. Other models of parent involvement focus on the basic obligations of schools to communicate goals, student progress, and programs that encourage parental involvement. Schools can also create programs where parents are involved in volunteering and attending school events, contacting schools to get to know teachers, and consulting with teachers regarding students' progress. Home activities include monitoring homework, creating special times

and opportunities for homework.

Stedman (1987) presented findings similar to Epstein. Stedman indicated that parental involvement involved the following characteristics: 1) good communications between the school and the home; 2) facilitation of parents' involvement in their children's learning; 3) getting parents politically involved on behalf of the school; 4) garnering vital parental support for the school's daily academic efforts; 5) sharing good governance.

Levine and Lezotte (1990) described other ways in which parents have been involved to include the following: 1) exerting pressure on public officials to help obtain and retain resources; 2) participating in school meetings designed to promote use of games and other instructional materials at home; 3) improving youngsters' attitudes toward school and learning; 4) helping to maintain an orderly climate in the lunchroom; participating in signing of annual contracts specifying rigorous discipline policies for their children; 5) sitting in classrooms to observe and monitor teacher performance and student learning; 6) attendance at bimonthly meetings to discuss children's progress; 7) participation in parental groups to buffer school from other parents attempting to change school policies; 8) informing administration if homework is based on productive assignments; 9) helping children use local library resources; participation in governance and management groups for planning programs sensitive to child development and behavioral principles (Levine and Lezotte,1990).

Anderson (1997) reports that other important measures include hiring a parent facilitator, and the belief on the part of teachers that parental involvement enhances effectiveness. Furthermore, Anderson indicates that programs dealing with school or

home facilitators provide great benefit to young children via home visits. Powell (1994) reports home visits are more intensive (defined as 11 or more home visits), when there is a participative relationship between the facilitator and the parent.

The significance of parental involvement in schools can be seen in the increase in research on the subject. National programs throughout the country are being established to help schools develop effective approaches to school-family partnerships. The "School, Family, and Community Partnerships" program is one such program. Sponsored through the United States Department of Education, the program is designed to develop effective parental and community programs. One aspect of the program is to increase the readiness and capabilities of colleges and universities to train teachers for family involvement in schools (Epstein, 1997; Hill, 1997).

Despite the importance of parent involvement as an effectiveness factor, it has been difficult for some researchers to link it to school effectiveness. One of the problems with the parent involvement factor is that it is so closely related to socioeconomic status. Another problem is that the schools cannot totally control or mandate parental involvement. Much depends on the willingness and cooperation of the parents. Additionally, researchers have indicated that few if any instruments have been designed to measure parent involvement as a single variable in schools. Most indicators of parent involvement are usually measured as sub tests for instruments measuring school climate or atmosphere. Finally, the many forms and varieties of parental involvement make it difficult to define and measure (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

Anderson (1997) reports there are other barriers which prevent parents from being

involved. For example, often, teachers perceive the emphasis on parent involvement as a lack of trust from parents and administrators regarding teachers' roles and responsibilities. From a 1996 qualitative study, Anderson reported that parents indicate they often feel distanced from schools for various reasons. Reasons include: parents' themselves, may have had bad experiences in schools; parents perceive teachers as "talking down" or "looking down"on them; teachers' stereotyping of parents and misconceptions about poor families, and a lack of understanding of family needs.

School Leadership: In urban school systems, studies have shown that the school leader, who in most cases, is the principal, may well be the most important influence, and the key to school success (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985). Others researchers have noted that one of the most recognizable differences between unusually effective low socioeconomic schools and unusually effective high socioeconomic schools is characterized by the role of the principal (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Bullard and Taylor, 1993; Clark, 1980).

Research describes the principal's role as multifaceted, and based entirely upon the organizational context of the school. This means there is no single style of management appropriate for all schools. Principals must find the style and structures most suited to their own unique situations. For example, researchers have observed that principals in effective high socioeconomic schools can use a more collaborative and collegial style of decision making. This is not the case for low socioeconomic schools that are effective. In low socioeconomic schools, principals appear to have to be more forceful in asserting themselves in making instructional decisions and intervening in classrooms where teachers

were not meeting their expectations (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Hallinger and Murphy, 1985).

Additionally, studies have found that principals in unusually effective low socio economic schools produce positive results regardless of the barriers (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Clark et al, 1980; Bullard and Taylor, 1993). Effective principals, according to the research, set themselves apart by being visionary leaders. They bring their teachers, staff, and students together by being committed to do whatever it takes to serve their constituencies (Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

Hallinger and Heck (1996) suggest that school effectiveness studies will be significantly enhanced by research which places the principal in the context of the school and its environment. This is because certain principals' behaviors have different effects in different organizational settings. The school's environment will ultimately shape the nature of the principal's role in most situations. Research indicates the principal's role is based on features such as the school's socioeconomic status, the nature of parental involvement and expectations in schooling, and the geographical location of the school.

Hallinger and Heck (1996) suggested that too many studies have ignored the environment and culture in which principals operate. As such, attempts are being made to outline an agenda for research on the principal's role in school effectiveness for the next generation of studies. These conclusions are supported by other research which has shown that different characteristics (i.e., school size, student's socioeconomic status, and school level) influence how principals approach their jobs (Levine and Lezotte, 1990).

In addition to the effect of the environment on the principal's role, research has

shown that various leadership models that have different consequences for student achievement. Hallinger et al., (1996) uses models created by Pitner (1988) to conceptualize the different aspects of school leadership. The authors explained that there are direct ways as well as indirect ways in which a principal can affect student achievement. For example, a principal's influence could be based on personal characteristics (such as values, beliefs, gender, and experiences). Other aspects include school mission, teacher expectation, and grouping of students. As such, the principal variable can be viewed as both a dependent and an independent variable. As a dependent variable, the principal's behavior is subject to the influence of other factors within the school and its environment. As an independent variable, the principal is an agent who influences the learning of pupils.

Researchers indicate that studies that explore effectiveness separately from the principal are inherently limited. Additionally, reviews of prior research on the subject of principal-effectiveness indicate that traditional studies have not generally done justice to the complexity of the relationship in terms of either theoretical or methodological sophistication (Hallinger and Heck, 1996).

In their review of the literature regarding school leadership, Levine and Lezotte (1990) described the principal's major roles to include several functions. These include selection and replacement of teachers, and maverick orientation and buffering. Other functions included frequent and personal monitoring of school activities and sense-making; high expenditure of time and energy for school improvement actions. Finally, Levine and Lezotte indicated the importance of support for teachers; acquisition of

resources; superior instructional leadership; availability and effective utilization of instructional support personnel.

Clark et al., (1980) finds that school leadership is important because leaders influence the behavior of other actors. Principals, therefore, are seen as the motivational support for school improvement. In most cases, principals act as the instructional leader who effectively communicates the mission of the school to the staff, parents, and students. The effective leader, according to Clark et al., understands and applies the characteristics of school effectiveness in the management of the instructional program of the school, operates his or her school as an independent company, and is not afraid to take risk. The leader knows how to inspire and lead, and uses data to determine what needs to be done. Goals are set which empower teachers as instructional leaders. There is shared leadership, as teachers have more power and more control and accountability. The principal knows that leadership must go beyond his or her role, and be more diverse to the point of the principal becoming the "leader of leaders" (Clark et. al, 1980).

Bullard and Taylor (1993), as well as Levine and Lezotte (1990) feature the work of various researchers who agree that teachers must be empowered to be leaders. The school, according to these authors, must become a learning center of shared values for students, parents, teachers and the principal. These attitudes help to shape the expectation for the school's success, and the influence the leader has on exceptional schools.

From a different perspective, however, Sergiovanni (1996) and Marshall (1996) indicate that principals must get away from operating solely through structured methods. Structured methods, according to these authors, do not take into consideration the values

of women, minorities, and others who were excluded from leadership theory and research. These authors see the principal's role as facilitating, and ensuring that the needs of children are met, and that the purpose of school is upheld. This is done by mobilizing the community to solve problems, and to support progress. Similarly, Marshall et al., (1996:291) described the principal's role as most effective when he or she operates from an ethic of caring. In this way, teachers and students feel connected to their schools, and are more receptive to forming collaborative and supportive relationships.

High Operational Expectations and Requirements for Students: Browder (1971) describes "high expectations" as the most difficult - and probably the most significant feature of the effective school movement. Other studies have found that high expectation is an important characteristic which is present in virtually all effective schools (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Henderson et al., 1996). A recent study of Catholic schools suggest African American urban youth, regardless of the socioeconomic status, are often better served in Catholic schools than public schools. Catholic values are perceived as important, because of teachers who expect, demand, and motivate their students to high levels of achievement. Other characteristics of Catholic schools include the development of self-concept and self-esteem among students and a strong core curriculum (Henderson et al., 1996).

Brookover, et al., (1979) found that as much as 80 percent of the variance in student achievement is explained when students, teachers, and principals expect and are committed to learning. Student achievement, according to Brookover, may be based on the belief and expectation of teachers, principals, parents, and the students themselves, that

they can be academic successes. Teachers and principals who believe that poor disadvantaged students are capable of high achievement are more likely to assume responsibility for seeing to it that the students do achieve at high levels (Brookover, 1979).

Bradbury, et al. (1982) indicated that although disadvantaged children can be taught effectively, their isolation and concentration in certain schools often cause teachers and administrators to have low expectations concerning their performance. One criticism is that educators often look at the life situation of disadvantaged students as reasons not to expect much from them rather than motivating them to learn. In effective schools students are seen as competent. Levine and Lezotte (1990) quote a study by Dorr-Breeme (1990). Dorr-Breeme concluded that differences in expectations reflect underlying differences in cultural beliefs that guide the behaviors of teachers. Teachers in more effective classrooms are more likely to hold students "strictly accountable" for their performance in areas such as homework and paying attention. For example, expectations are operationalized by insisting that students learn to read with understanding. Research indicates that teachers in less effective classes excuse students' lapses. Excuses are made on the grounds that they experience problems at home, or they are doing the best they can do. Also, less effective classes focus more on mechanical decoding skills through "worksheets and dittos."

Teachers and educators must commit to doing all it takes to make sure students perform in a manner that will lead to learning (Levine and Lezotte, 1990). This is a critical part of the effective school model. Studies on school effectiveness have found that differences in expectations of students on the part of faculty members translate into

different actions in classrooms.

Additionally, research on effective schools indicates that disadvantaged students achieve best when learning is related to the students' own purpose, experiences, and interest (Gross, 1985). "High expectations" should provide for such issues by focusing on the individual personality of students, their human needs, motivation, and morale. Research has shown that when teachers demonstrate high expectations, the results are positive: student scores improve, attitudes are more positive, and there is increased participation of students and particularly those designated as low achievers (Bullard and Taylor, 1990). Schools that serve disadvantaged students must provide the kind of challenge and motivation so that all students can and will learn regardless of the obstacles.

Knapp (1995) agrees that teachers must teach for meaning and attempt to use the backgrounds of disadvantaged students as a positive basis for learning in the classroom. Examples include using a novel about Hispanic migrant children, or African Americans, for a variety of learning experiences. Teachers must be able to assess and interpret instructional outcomes, and coordinate instruction as appropriate. In this type of setting, expectations for all students must be high, and teachers do not teach to the average, but teach to the top of the class. In this way, students learn from each other. In order to accomplish this type of teaching, staff development is essential, and effective teaching is key to implementation.

"High expectations" also mean that schools must address the issue of "tracking." Tracking has been described as grouping students by their "ability to learn." Slavin and Braddock (1995) indicate that research has shown that tracking does not result in better

achievement for students. Rather, they indicate that students in lower track classes perform less well than their counterparts in heterogeneous classes, and students in higher track classes perform no better than their counterparts in heterogeneous classes. Researchers stress that when educational leaders and teachers track, they don't expect students to do very much. Students play out expectations when they are not challenged (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

It has also been found that teacher-student interactions, and responses to each other are often strained in low income schools. Sarason (1990) points to the importance of student-teacher interaction. One of the problems, according to Sarason, is that students often do not feel secure enough to ask questions, and thus gain a real understanding of some subject matter that may be confusing. Through questions which teachers may direct at students, there is opportunity to allow students the sufficient response time. Teachers should provide students the proper coaching to allow them to come up with the right answer. In this way, teachers reinforce subject matter, ensure student understanding, and build important relationships with students.

Similarly, research from Bullard and Taylor (1993) shows three basic behaviors that are related to student-teacher interaction and question asking. These include: student response time, teacher feedback, and personal regard for students. These three components, according to Bullard and Taylor (1993), make for an upbeat classroom atmosphere based on positive interaction between teachers and students. To be effective, teachers should solicit individual student participation through question asking, and provide ample time for student response. Bullard and Taylor describe this process as

representing "an observable, dramatic shift in the power relationship within the classroom" (Bullard and Taylor, 1993)

The correlate, **"Clear and Focused School Mission,"** focuses on organizational structure, goals and missions. Under this correlate, there is a clearly articulated mission for the school. The staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to academics, instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability (Bullard and Taylor, 1993). The mission is known by all, clearly communicated and easily understood. There are clear objectives in each subject area, and the curriculum is aligned with the teaching objectives.

Expectations must be clearly defined through deliberate and careful planning. There is assurance of understanding and commitment (Bullard and Taylor, 1993). Levine and Lezotte (1990) characterize this correlate through "faculty commitment to a shared and articulated mission, problem solving orientation, and faculty cohesion." There are also collaboration, consensus, communication, and collegiality. Important also are faculty input into decision making, and school wide emphasis on recognizing positive performance (Levine and Lezotte, 1990). The end result is that teachers hold students accountable for their work and teachers accept the responsibility for student learning.

The correlate, **"Safe and Orderly Environment"** places emphasis on an orderly, purposeful environment. In such an environment, students and teachers feel safe and are free from the threat of harm. The atmosphere is not oppressive, and is designed to be conducive to teaching and learning (Bullard and Taylor, 1993). This type of atmosphere is created through school wide policies which enforce discipline agreed upon by staff.

students, and parents.

A "safe and orderly environment" focuses on the human needs of organizations. Just as standards, roles and expectations are necessary to the functioning of an organization, all social systems must function in a safe environment. Researchers indicate that instability, injustice, unfairness, or inconsistency can lead to feelings of anxiety. Such an environment can also include an atmosphere of threat and physical harm for both students and staff (Miskel and Hoy, 1987; Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

Additionally, there must be an effective management system in place to keep students engaged in their academic work. This is to assure that teachers will not have to struggle with students to maintain order. This process is attained through an "orderly, enabling" learning environment that is not tight or restrictive. Restrictive environments limit learning opportunities and instructional strategies. Important, however, is that within each school, there are discipline, and a code of rules regarding safety and conduct. A primary goal is to keep violence and gang activity out of the school with a zero tolerance rate (Knapp, 1995; Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

In addition to sound discipline, students are also given frequent recognition for good behavior, and are encouraged and supported in every respect. The school promotes a sense of belonging, participation and school pride. These characteristics are aimed at making school a place where students want to be. The result is usually reduced absenteeism, and strong attendance. The school campus also reflects the school pride, and the school facility and grounds are attractive and well maintained by staff, students and parents (Levine and Lezotte,1990; Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task: Time is considered essential in the learning process. Teachers must allocate a sufficient amount of classroom time for mastery of basic skills. During that time, students should be engaged in planned learning activities which are directly related to the stated objectives. As such, time must be used in an efficient manner to maximize learning through classrooms which have been specifically designed for that purpose. Wasted time in areas such as passing between classes, is eliminated as much as possible (Bacon and Evers, 1994; Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

Opportunity to learn also evolves around the human side of organizations. Typically, the individual student serves as the primary focus, and is recognized as the prime beneficiary. Levine and Lezotte (1990) indicate that a focus on individual students generally requires flexible classes. Flexible classes are less formal but more intense, and more focused. Teachers must be trained in such a way that provides each student with opportunities to participate and respond. The curriculum is accelerated, and there are standards in place which will be successfully taught to all students. In such classrooms, students are never abandoned, but are constantly helped along by the teacher and other students. Additionally, opportunities to learn are considered sufficient only when teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in basic skill areas. For a high percentage of that allocated time, students are engaged in planned learning activities directly related to identified objectives (Miskel and Hoy, 1987; Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

The focus is also on effective classroom management. Teachers must be given the authority to manage their classroom to allow for maximum availability. The use of time

for learning, as well as a mastery of central learning skills is essential (Levine and Lezotte, 1990). Teachers must effectively manage disruptions, establish classroom routines, hold students accountable for work, motivate students, pace instruction and make different choices about the subject matter they are teaching (Knapp, 1995). In essence, teachers must be given the responsibility for attaining the academic success of students.

The correlate, "**Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress**" suggests that schools should be self-evaluating organizations which continually monitor and correct their own activities. This includes frequent assessment of student progress and the effectiveness of school programs. There must be frequent review of achievement standards. Teachers are expected to use criteria for assigning grades in a consistent manner. They should also be able to provide appropriate testing, and follow up by interpreting and communicating test analyses and results to parents. Communicating test results is critical because students and parents should be informed immediately about the progress students are making toward achieving stated objectives. Information from evaluations and assessments are used to make the necessary changes and adjustments to improve programs and alter teaching and learning strategies as necessary. There is also a need to make sure that tests which are used to assess student performance are congruent with what is being taught (Bacon and Evers, 1994).

Aaron Wildavsky *(1972)* described a self evaluating organization as one which continuously monitors its own activities. The purpose is to determine whether goals are being met, or even whether these goals should continually be pursued. Monitoring further suggests that goals should be reviewed and clarified on a regular basis, and problems

should be identified and corrected immediately. Because schools are to be held accountable for students academic achievement, monitoring students' progress is essential, and requires that feedback on student academic progress is frequently obtained. Darling-Hammond (1991) indicated measuring student performance (or the lack of it) and assigning responsibility for improving the situation is the crux of educational accountability. Through accountability, there is a pledge that the education system will be characterized by effectiveness, equity, and efficiency. Successful actions will be documented, and mistakes will be identified and corrected quickly.

This type of accountability requires that data on performance be disaggregated by race, sex, and socioeconomic background. It is essential to know who's learning, who is not learning, and the reasons why. When students are not learning, it is considered a school-wide problem. The question then becomes, "how effective is the teaching in that particular school?" The answers to such questions require multiple assessment methods. Methods should include, but are limited to: teacher-made tests, samples of students' work, mastery skills checklists, criterion-referenced tests, and norm-referenced tests. Accordingly, the results of testing are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program (Darling-Hammond, 1991).

Resources: Montgomery and Rossi (1997) report that over the past 30 years, studies have found huge disparities in school expenditures among districts and between schools. Students who are most affected by these disparities are inner city and low income students. These students, reportedly, receive the lowest quality education because school funding relies heavily on local government revenues, and particularly local property taxes.

Levy, Meltsner and Wildavsky (1974) point to the fact that parent contributions can also make a difference in the amount of resources a school receives. If a school is located in a well-to-do neighborhood where parents are actively involved, schools can obtain resources directly from parents' contributions, fund raising, support of PTA, etc.

In poor and low income areas, residents are either unable or unwilling to pay additional taxes. Consequently, poor school districts are often unable to generate sufficient funds to provide for a quality education. The unfortunate part of this is that these students are the ones who face the greatest economic and social problems. They are also the ones who have the greatest need for educational opportunities which will help them escape the cycle of poverty.

As a result, disparities in resources have continually presented a more debilitating effect on high poverty, inner city areas. There have been several court cases on the state level that have challenged inequitable educational funding. Schmitz (1994) explains that most state courts analyze school funding disparities with a generalized approach under state constitutional education provisions. In essence, the courts fail to identify the particular plight of the poor urban student.

Schmitz (1994) indicates that problems with resources were made worse by reductions in financial contributions to education during the Reagan Administration. Because federal contributions have continued to decline, local school districts have had to assume the ultimate responsibility for implementing school policy. From another perspective, Levy et al. (1974) indicate that the amount of funding and compensatory education black schools received were in some cases in excess of that of white schools.

Compensatory education marks a controversial issue, as there is the perception that it doesn't make a difference in equalizing education outcomes for poor students. Based on these beliefs, taxpayers' revolts have instigated court cases which have challenged dependence on the local property tax as a basis for school finance.

Montgomery and Rossi (1997) explain that the importance of how resources are allocated can be seen through the actions of many middle and high income parents. These parents attempt to place their children in schools that are rich in resources that support courses in foreign languages, science and mathematic labs, and other enrichment programs. Poor parents often complain that the educational opportunities in their local schools are inferior to the educational opportunities provided by schools in high-income areas. In lower income areas, teachers often report that they supplement student texts and materials out of their own salaries.

The point is made that there is very little that teachers can do to correct some of the other difficulties that low income schools face. Montgomery and Rossi (1996) quote Kozol (1991) who describes horrendous conditions in schools such as backed up sewage, collapsing tops, shattered windows, faulty heating systems, and broken toilets. Such depressing surroundings are believed to stifle aspirations and increase alienation in school. Additionally, because resources are scarce, administrators are unable to develop long term plans for schools because they cannot predict the availability of resources.

Overall, the issues involving school resources have received much less attention than the other correlates of school effectiveness. The question of resources marks one of the critical debates in educational policy. In 1966, the well-known Coleman Report

suggested that school resources do not make the difference in the performance of students in low income schools. Rather, family and peer influences, according to Coleman, were the important determinants of student performance. Other more recent studies have found that school inputs do correlate with improved student test performance. These inputs include: smaller class sizes, high quality teaching staff, experienced teachers, teachers with advanced degrees, and school compensatory and enrichment programs, specialized instruction and better teacher literacy skills. These kinds of inputs appear to be especially important, when controlling for family and community background factors (Montgomery and Rossi, 1996).

From another perspective, studies have found that differences in early childhood resources may lead to a widening achievement gap over time between children. Resources such as early childhood education are believed to increase the likelihood that children will have the motivation and skills to invest in and profit from schooling, resulting in cumulative advantages over time.

Montgomery and Ross (1996) concluded that creating good conditions in low income schools may require more funding than middle-class schools to provide equitable education. This is based on the fact that poor areas may have to spend more money to attract and keep good teachers and expert personnel. These authors further suggest that the cost of instructional materials, building upkeep, and support services may also vary between regions. Addressing these concerns, however, may have to come through changes in courts to eliminate funding schemes which discriminate against poor urban students.

Research Questions: The literature has shown that what appears to be missing from the studies of school systems are inquiries on how schools are applying effectiveness criteria (Holdaway, 1997; Meier, 1997). From this perspective, it is assumed that different cultures, socio economic status, neighborhood environments, etc. have a direct impact on learning environments. Therefore, we need to study the inner context of schools, including the voices and experiences of the people who work in those schools.

Erwin (1998) explains that exploring differences among schools within a contextual perspective helps to identify the symbols and tools shared by individuals belonging to a group. Contextual explorations also emphasize behavioral differences, beliefs, history, and patterns of interactions in groups. Such information provides additional meaning and a deeper understanding of how specific factors impact learning and school dynamics. Heinecke and Drier (1998) express the need for research that engages teachers, and provides feedback to them. This type of qualitative information, according to Heinecke and Drier, improves the responsiveness and thinking of educators.

Previous research of this type has generally utilized small sample sizes or case studies. Erwin (1998) explained that case studies (which involve a process of discovery for studying people or processes) provide for the sharing of deeper understandings of the experiences and ideas of the people studied. Case studies also provide critical descriptions, explanations and verification of how classrooms work. The effect, according to Heinecke and Drier (1998), would be an understanding of the true experiences of participants. Such research also has the potential of capturing the complexity of situations.

Based on the above considerations, the following research questions were designed to see if there are differences in how the correlates of effectiveness are perceived in a high achieving school as compared to a lower achieving school.

Research questions:

1. "Are there differences in perceptions regarding how 'parent involvement' is viewed at the high achieving school in comparison to the lower achieving school? What factors account for the differences?" This question is based on literature which suggests that parent involvement marks one of the major differences between effective and ineffective low socioeconomic schools. The research further indicates that in effective schools, parents understand and actively support their children's learning both at home and at school. Additionally, successful schools plan and allow for multiple methods of involving parents, and communicating learning objectives, student progress, as well as programs to facilitate teachers and parents' meetings, conferences, etc. (Hallinger and Murphy, 1986; Clark, 1980; Montgomery and Rossi, 1997).

2. "Are there differences in perceptions regarding how 'school leadership' is viewed (i.e., leadership from the principal) at the two schools? What factors account for the differences?" In successful schools, studies have found that the school leader, who is usually the principal, may well be the most important influence, and the key to school success. This question is asked to determine if school leadership is a factor which contributes to the high achieving school's success, and to gain perceptions regarding how teachers, students and parents view school leadership at the two schools (Hallinger and Murphy, 1986).

3. "Are there differences in perceptions regarding how participants view 'teacher expectations' at the two schools? Are there specific factors which account for the differences?" Research indicates that high teacher expectations of students represent a critical component in effectiveness in low income schools (Henderson, 1996; Levine and Lezotte, 1990). This question is asked to determine how teachers relate high expectations of students, and how teachers regard and provide for the learning needs of at-risk students (Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

4. "Are there differences in perceptions regarding how participants view 'a safe and orderly environment' at the two schools?" This question is based on research which indicates that the environment of effective schools is

conducive to learning and teaching. Although there are rules and regulations regarding safety and conduct, there is a sense of school pride and school spirit in an atmosphere that is not oppressive (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

5. "Are there differences in perceptions regarding how school 'mission' is viewed at the two schools? What factors account for the differences?" This question is based on research which indicates that in effective schools, there is a mission statement that is known, clearly communicated, and easily understood. Additionally, the focus is on academic goals, student learning and achievement, and there are objectives in each subject area to meet goals (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

6. "Are there differences in perceptions regarding how participants view 'opportunities to learn, and time on task'? What factors account for the differences?" Research indicates that opportunities to learn and time on task emphasizes that time for learning is critical in the sense that there must be adequate time for essential skills. Classes start quickly, purposeful assignments are ready and there is mastery for all students (Bacon and Evers, 1994; Bullard and Taylor, 1993).

7. "Are there differences in perceptions regarding participants' views on 'monitoring of student progress'? What factors account for the differences" This question reflects the importance placed on schools to be self evaluating organizations that continuously monitor and evaluate their own activities to determine if goals are being met (Wildasky, 1972).

8. "Are there differences in perceptions regarding how participants view 'resources'? What factors account for the differences, and how adequate are resources?" Research indicates that school finance inadequacies arise most often in poor and low income areas where residents are either unable or unwilling to pay additional taxes. Poor schools are, therefore, unable to generate sufficient funds to provide for a quality education (Montgomery and Rossi, 1997).

Answering the Research Questions: Qualitative research, such as case studies, requires multiple evidence. Yin (1989) explains that this increases the reliability of the information, by linking the conclusions with the evidence and the case study process. The following section provides an overview of the evidence used in this study to answer the

research questions.

1. The research literature: A search of the literature served to define indicators of perceived school effectiveness focusing on low income schools.

2. Correlates of School Effectiveness: The literature pointed to the correlates of effectiveness as the factors which are likely to make the difference between a high achieving and a low achieving school. As such, indicators for each correlate area served as the criteria for constructing questionnaires. The questionnaires consisted of open ended, focused questions in each of the correlate areas. The focus group and interview data were assessed, coded, and analyzed by specific indicators of each correlate. Ultimately, participant responses were categorized by how closely they matched indicators of the correlates. This process was used to see if there are differences in the pattern of responses at the two schools.

3. Personal interviews and focus groups served as the major sources of data for this study. These methods allowed comments at length (from students, teachers, parents, and the principals). The purpose was to gain their perceptions on the eight correlates of effectiveness. After the data were collected, responses for each correlate were systematically analyzed. The researcher looked for patterns in the data which might account for any differences between the schools based on indicators of the correlates.

4. Documentary and Secondary Data Sources: In addition to focus groups, and personal interviews, other secondary sources of data were reviewed and analyzed. These additional sources included: a review and comparison of student outcomes in key subject areas, profiles of each school, profiles of students, and staff; school descriptors and indicators (based on mobility and stability rates, attendance, discipline, promotions, resources and expenditures). There was also data available from a previously conducted "Needs Assessment Surveys." The Needs Assessment Surveys were also based on the correlates of school effectiveness, and provided information on attitudes and perceptions of students, teachers, principals, and parents. These sources were reviewed and analyzed as a means for cross checking and collaborating focus group and personal interview data.

Chapter III

Methodology

This study compares the perceptions of students, parents, teachers and principals at two low income, urban elementary schools. The purpose is to examine trends and patterns in perceptions which might account for differences between a high achieving and a low achieving school. This current chapter discusses the methodology, research setting, study participants, data collection procedures, indicators, analysis, study period, and limitations of the study.

Case Study Methodology: Bailey (1992) describes a case as a study of human interactions, within its own context, that can produce valuable information through a process of discovery. Such a process can be interpretive, problem solving, or theory building. Yin (1989) describes a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. The boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident, and multiple sources are data are used to establish a range of evidence. In terms of investigating contemporary and complex phenomenon, this study meets the criteria for case study methodology.

In a real life context, this research addresses the problem of academic achievement for disadvantaged students. This is accomplished by exploring patterns in perceptions which may account for differences between a high achieving and lower achieving school. The events studied were relevant, recent and critical. This case study meets the criteria for being a systematic inquiry, in that multiple sources of data were analyzed for an

examination of both schools. These sources included: focus groups, personal interviews, school profiles of students and staff, history of student achievement data and other previously collected data relative to the effective school correlates. These sources helped to establish a framework for comparisons, as well as provide multiple measures.

In this type of study, researchers explain that the exclusive use of quantitative methodology would not be appropriate for answering how and why similar schools would produce different academic results. Yin (1989) explains that case studies have a distinct advantage in this type of research. By posing how and why questions, it provides opportunity to explore, explain, and create a special kind of understanding of institutional processes.

Research Setting: The setting for this study consisted of two low income elementary schools in the City of Norfolk, Virginia. Focus groups and personal interviews served as the primary methods of data collections. All focus groups and interviews were conducted on the school sites for each individual school, either during or immediately after the school day. Participants included parents, teachers, students, and principals from both schools. Krueger (1996) refers to the selection criteria as "commonality." Some other researchers have used the terms "purposive" or "volunteer" sample. This means that participants were selected nonrandomly, based on the fact that they possessed the characteristics necessary for doing the research (Frey, Boktan, Friedman and Kreps, 1991). In the case of parents, a convenience sample was used. Through the convenience sample, the study utilized parents who were available and accessible.

Initial contact was made with the principal of each school to obtain permission and support for doing the study. Each agreed to participate, although the principal from the comparison school expressed some hesitancy. Afterwards, personal interviews were conducted with the principals for each school, as well as the former principal of the high achieving school.

With the principals' permission, letters were sent to teachers, and parents which invited them to participate in the focus groups. Students' participation was based on parental consent. As such, students received letters to take home to obtain permission from their parents. Additional detail regarding the characteristics of participants, and the response rate is provided later in this chapter.

Sample Selection: Selection of the schools used in this study was based on the need to compare the high achieving school with a lower achieving school that was matched on a wide range of indicators. The comparison school was chosen, based on the fact that it was similar in terms of most indicators, as well as programs and curriculums which were being simultaneously implemented in both schools.

An analysis of school and student profiles (based on data from the School Administrative Offices for both schools, 1995) revealed vast similarities between the high achieving school and the comparison school. For example, as indicated on Table Five, both schools are comparable in terms of racial balance, social economic status as based on the number of students receiving free lunches. The school are also similar in terms of the number of classrooms, teaching stations and student to teacher ratio, teachers' average years, class size, total number of students, and percent of male and female students.

Table Five

School and Student Profiles

	High Achieving School	Comparison School
Construction Date	1953	1990
Grade Levels	K-7	K-5
Number Teaching Stations	31	32
Teachers' Average Years Experience	9 years	10 years
Class Size	20	19
Total Number of Students	536	493
Racial Balances - Black/White	266:1	247:1
Ratio - Percent Black	99.1%	99.4%
% Receiving Free Lunches	91.2 percent	95.2%
Percent Male Students	288 (52.1%)	252 (51.6%)
Percent Female Students	248 (47.9%)	241 (48.4%)
Special Education Students	46	4
Students Living in Attendance Area	512	486
Students Transferred in	149	36
Regular	109	30
Special Education	40	6
Out of District Transfers	24	10

(Source: Norfolk School Administration Office - Schools Profile Data - 1996/97).

There were notable differences, however, in some profile areas. For one, there were 46 students in special education in the high achieving school versus four in the comparison school. There were also differences in the number of students who are transferred into the school during an average school year: 149 in the high achieving school and 36 in the comparison school.

Attendance and Discipline: As indicated on Table Six, both schools have similar records in the areas of attendance and promotions. There are notable differences in the following areas: 1) Suspensions - less than one percent in the high achieving school versus 9.4 percent in the comparison school. 2) Honor roll students - 46.4 percent in the high achieving school versus 34 percent in the comparison school. These factors were compared to data obtained from the focus groups to see if there were also differences in perspectives of teachers, students, parents and principals regarding these factors.

Mobility and Stability Rates: There were also notable differences in the areas of the schools' mobility and stability rates. Mobility rates refer to the number of students coming and leaving the school within a given school year. Stability rates refer to the number of students who are permanent, and remain in the school during a given school year. Whereas the high achieving school has an 84.62 percent stability rate (28.73 mobility rate), the comparison school has a 68.94 percent stability rate (46.14 percent mobility rate). Again, the differences reflected in this data as shown in Table Seven will be compared to the focus group data to see if the perceptions of teachers, students, parents and principals may shed some light on these areas.

Table Six

Attendance, Discipline, Promotions, and Honor Roll

	High Achieving School	Comparison School
Attendance (Number of Students Meeting or Exceeding Attendance Guidelines)	95%	96%
Suspensions	.9%	9.4%
Promotions	94.6%	95%
Honor Roll Students	46.4%	34%

(Source: School Administration Profile Data - 1996/97)

Table Seven

Mobility and Stability Data

	High Achieving School	Comparison School
Mobility Rates	28.73%	46.14%
Stability Rates	84.62%	68.94%

(Source: School Administration Profile Data - 1996/97).

The two schools were also compared on other indicators. These indicators included: resources, school programs, history of student achievement data, populations, mission, goals and objectives, demographics, and a previously conducted Needs Assessment Survey. The Needs Assessment Survey was based on the same factors, and goals, as this current study. A comparison of the schools, based on these indicators, generated a wealth of information. These comparative analyses are summarized in the appendix.

Data Collection: Focus groups and personal interviews were used to examine the perceptions of teachers, students and parents, and the principals on the eight factors of school effectiveness. As previously mentioned, personal interviews were conducted with the principals. Researchers indicate that both, focus groups and personal interviews, are appropriate sources for case study research.

The focus groups consisted of nine small groups, comprising a total of 76 persons. Each group had from two to ten participants. There were four groups of students: two groups from each school. Teachers comprised two groups: one group from each school. (It is noted, however, that only two teachers from the comparison school chose to participate in the research). There were three groups of parents: two groups from the high achieving school, and one group of parents from the comparison school. Each group answered focused, open-ended questions regarding the correlates of effectiveness.

The focus groups encompassed a conversational style that took place over a short period of time. Open ended and focused questions, which were designed around the

correlates of effectiveness, were used to initiate the conversation. Krueger (1994:6) described focus group research in the following manner:

> "carefully planned and guided discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment. It is conducted with approximately seven to ten people by an interviewer. The discussion should be comfortable and enjoyable for participants who share their ideas and perceptions on a particular subject."

The goal of this research was to get as much information as possible relative to the participant perceptions on the correlates of effectiveness. There was much interaction within the groups, and participants appeared comfortable sharing their perceptions on the questions which were asked. The role of the researcher was limited to asking specific questions relative to indicators of the correlates of school effectiveness.

The following section provides additional details regarding the personal interviews and the focus groups.

Personal Interviews: In this study, personal interviews were conducted face-to-face with the principals associated with each school. A personal interview was also conducted with the former principal of the high achieving school. The basis for selection was "commonality," and "purposiveness." This means there was a need to include people who shared similar experiences, knowledge, and ideas about the workings of each individual school. The decision to interview the former principal was based on the fact that he had been the school leader at the high achieving school for sixteen years. He was a black male, and had been away from the high achieving school just one year prior to the time this current study was conducted.

Both current principals were female, one black and one white. The current principal in the high achieving school had been principal of the school for only one year at the time of this study. She had served in the capacity of assistant principal for two years under the leadership of the former principal of the high achieving school. The principal in the comparison school had been the principal of that school for approximately four years.

In each case, questions pertaining to the correlates of effectiveness were asked orally, and responses were recorded both manually and electronically. During the interview, the principal at this high achieving school was gracious and helpful. She showed a great deal of enthusiasm for the research, and she encouraged teachers to participate. She actually explained to the teachers that participating in this current study would be productive. This was because they were already in the process of doing their own effectiveness study with the correlates. She set the stage for the full cooperation and participation of everyone in her school. She answered each question in detail, and helped arrange for students and parents' participation.

In the comparison school, the principal was also cooperative and gracious. It should be noted, however, that she was much more reserved and apprehensive about the entire research process. Although she was skeptical about participating, she answered each question in detail. A note of importance is that she indicated she would not ask or encourage teachers, students, or parents to participate. She did allow notes of invitation to be extended. She also suggested that small incentives be offered. As the principal suggested, letters of invitation were extended to teachers, and parents, and incentives were offered. Without the help of the principal, however, it was difficult to have access to

participants for the focus groups. As such, only two teachers participated in the focus group. Ten parents participated, in addition to a total of 16 students.

Focus Groups Participants: Subsequently, a total of 76 individuals (48 in the high achieving school, and 28 in the comparison school) participated in nine focus groups as illustrated in Table Eight. The teachers' focus groups were conducted first, and in each case, the focus groups took place immediately after the school day and on the school site. At both schools, the teachers who participated were cooperative and responded to questions in detail. The principals and teachers from both schools allowed students to be interviewed during the school day and on the school facilities. To accurately capture the data, participant responses were recorded both manually and electronically.

Teachers: In the high achieving schools, the principal encouraged and arranged for teachers to participate. In the lower achieving comparison school, the principal gave permission for letters of invitation to be sent to all teachers of fourth and fifth grade students.

In the high achieving school, there was 100 percent participation of fourth and fifth grade teachers from the high achieving school (a total of eight teachers). Four were black females, two were white female teachers, and two were black men. Similar to their principal, teachers from the high achieving school showed much enthusiasm for the research.

In the comparison school, only two teachers agreed to participate, despite invitations, follow-up and offers of incentives. Of the two teachers, both were female, one white and one black. Although the two teachers represented a small sample for a focus

group, both were very vocal, and provided a great deal of information regarding their perceptions in each correlate area. As previously noted, the principal in the comparison school did not encourage teachers to participate. The analysis of the teachers' responses is provided in Chapter four of this study.

Students: Through the fourth and fifth grade teachers, letters of invitations were sent by students to parents to obtain permission for students to participate. Within the first few days, more than twenty students from each school had returned forms. Based on the purpose of this study, these numbers represented enough participants to schedule the interviews. Of the forms returned, there was a good mix of both male and female students. As each school had classes which were separated by gender, it was easy to obtain an equal number of male and female students.

Student participation was good at both schools. On the day of the scheduled focus group sessions, twenty students from the high achieving school (who had returned consent forms) were available to participate. Sixteen students from the comparison school (who had returned consent form) were available to participate. The other students who were scheduled to participate were not available, or chose not to participate on the day of the interviews. Of the thirty-six students who participated, all were black. As indicated earlier, there were equal numbers of males and females. Students at the high achieving school were poised, confident, and were able to successfully participate in the discussions. Some of the students at the comparison school, however, were unruly, and it was more difficult to interview them.

Parents: Initially, plans were made to randomly select parents from each school.

Because of privacy considerations, and the lack of access to parents, it was difficult to contact them and arrange for follow up. Therefore, a convenience sample was used. The convenience sample was assembled by scheduling the focus groups immediately after a school activity where a number of parents were scheduled to attend. This method was used in both schools. The goal of twenty parents was met in the high achieving school. Of the twenty parents who actually participated, all were black. The group consisted predominantly of females, with the exception of two black men. These parents expressed great enthusiasm, commitment, concern, knowledge and loyalty to their school.

In the comparison school, only ten parents participated in the research. Of the ten, nine were black females, one was a white female parent. These parents were also very gracious and cooperative. They provided a great deal of input to the questions. Of importance, is that they expressed many concerns about the school, and particularly about neighborhood conditions surrounding the school.

In addition to the three personal interviews with the principals from both schools, seventy-six persons participated in nine focus groups. See Table Eight for a description of all focus group participants. A description of the focus group and interview questions used to obtain responses is located in the appendix.

Table Eight

FOCUS GROUP AND PERSONAL INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS

Participants	High Achieving School	Comparison School
Parents (N=30)	20 Parents % Black 100% % White 0 % Male 10% (2) % Female 90% (18)	10 Parents % Black 90% (9) % White 10% (1) % Male 0 % Female 100%
Teachers (N=10)	8 Teachers % Black 75% (6) % White 25% (2) % Black Female 50% (4) % White Female 25% (2) %Black Male 25% (2)	2 Teachers % Black 50% (1) % White 50% (1) % Female 100% (2) % Male 0
Students (N=36)	20 Students % Black 100% % White 0 % Male 50% (10) % Female 50% (10)	16 Students % Black 100% % White 0 % Male 50% (8) % Female 50% (8)
Principals (N=3)	1 White Female 1 Black Male (former principal)	1 Black Female
Total (N=79)		

Questionnaires and Data Collection Instruments: A school effectiveness questionnaire (i.e., interview and focus group question guides) was developed for each group: principals, teachers, students, and parents. These four questionnaires were structured around indicators of the school effectiveness correlates. The indicators for each correlate were derived from a review of the literature in chapter II (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Bullard and Taylor; 1993; Holdaway, 1997; Bacon and Evers, 1993). To better assure the reliability, questions pertaining to each correlate area were worded similarly and sequenced in the same order for each personal interview and focus group. Sequencing questions for each group helped to create a systematic process for analysis. A tape recorder was used to capture the data electronically for all interviews. Responses were also recorded manually. The data was then transcribed from the tapes and displayed on charts for a careful examination of the responses from each group.

It should be noted that the principals and teachers were asked questions in each of the correlate areas. Parents and students, however, were not asked questions in those correlate areas which pertain basically to the role of the staff (i.e., time on task, and monitoring of student progress). A description of the focus group and interview questions is provided in the appendix.

Analysis: Analysis was based on the need to detect and explore emerging themes and patterns in the data. The goal was to learn more about the people and their experiences by describing specifically what was said during the focus groups and interviews, and by using a systematic format for interpreting the data.

As described by Krueger (1996), analysis involved the initial sequencing of

questions for each interview to allow for a more efficient means of comparisons between and among groups.

Before the questions were asked, the researcher provided an overview of the topic to allow participants to become familiar with the subject matter. After the participants responded to each question, the researcher provided a brief summary of their responses for verification. The participants could clarify or add to their initial responses. The researcher was assisted by an additional person who took notes during the interview process.

After each interview and focus group discussion, the researcher developed a verbatim transcript from the recorded data. As emphasis was placed on a search for emerging patterns and themes, a profile was created for each group based on the key concepts which emerged. The transcripts were also used to create qualitative displays for a more efficient examination and review of the data. Responses were also coded, based on indicators of the correlates of effectiveness. The codes (i.e., indicators of effectiveness) served as a gauge to more accurately identify and relate participant responses to the constructs used in this study.

In each instance, the profiles for each group were created and displayed side by side, on long sheets of paper. In this way, group responses for both schools, could be easily seen, coded, and compared. As noted, efforts were made to look for key concepts, emerging themes and patterns within each school as well as between each school. After this initial reduction of data, the researcher sought to verify and cross check for recurring statements, stories, symbols, etc. The ultimate goal, however, was to organize in such a

way that the participants' words and stories were not only verifiable, but could stand alone and serve as the major source of analysis for this study.

The profiles, transcript and qualitative displays were verified and examined several times. The tapes were replayed to make sure participant responses were represented accurately. The profiles were also compared to the other data sources as a means of cross checking and verification. (A description of the secondary and documentary sources is provided in the appendix). Finally, the results were compared with previous studies on school effectiveness. The purpose was to see if findings could be inferred to previous theories of school effectiveness, based on the correlates of school effectiveness, and emerging trends and patterns.

Validity: This study uses the definitions of the effective school model (Bullard and Taylor, 1993; Lezotte and Levine, 1990; Holdaway, 1997). The correlates of effectiveness are based on criteria from empirical studies and case studies of effective schools across the country. Research shows that characteristics such as strong leadership, parental involvement, and teacher expectations are indeed related to "effectiveness." These correlates, when properly implemented, have served to produce desired outcomes for all students (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Bullard and Taylor, 1992; Edmonds, 1979; Bernard, 1988; Anastasi, 1982). This study had construct validity, based on relationships which had previously been established based on the correlates of effectiveness and the target population of disadvantaged students.

Internal Validity: Case studies are not intended to show variance or cause on explanatory variables. Consistent with the theories of Mohr (1992), this study was useful

for showing patterns, consistencies and inconsistencies in the information obtained from informants (Mohr, 1992). The goal was to learn more about people or groups by listening to them talk about their experiences, and express what's on their minds.

One of the strengths of this design was in the use of a comparison school. The comparison school was similar in many respects to the high achieving school, but different in academic achievement. There was opportunity to compare the schools on a wide range of indicators. These multiple sources helped to lessen the effects of confounding variables which might account for the differences (Fitz-Gibbons and Morris, 1987). Additionally, the researcher was open to negative evidence, and sought to clarify participants' accounts during interviews and focus groups.

Another method which was used to strengthen validity was cross checks. Bogdan and Taylor (1984) quote Ernest Burgess (1931) who argued that the validity of a qualitative study depends on the manner in which the information is attained and handled. This study used cross checks to examine consistency between the accounts of participants in each group. Checking participant accounts against more objective evidence added to the validity of this study.

External Validity: One of the limitations of case studies is that they are not generalizable, and results cannot be inferred to a broader population. Findings from this study, however, were consistent with theoretical propositions, and empirical findings on school effectiveness (Holdaway, 1997; Bacon and Evers, 1994). As such, the study's findings were useful for comparing empirical results with other studies. Additionally, the specific patterns and trends observed were useful for formulating ideas and theories in

conjunction with other studies. Mohr (1992:6) states that "Case studies of human behavior cannot be made the basis for universal generalization (because of the many variations and reactions to social, psychological, and environmental forces). However, a presentation of facts and understanding in terms of behavioral expectations under similar situations can provide valuable information to be reused."

Reliability: The collection of data, and the analysis, were handled in a careful and systematic manner. A systematic process helped to ensure reliability, thus making sure the results would be as error-free as possible. An important consideration was that data collection procedures would be consistent from one administration to another (Yin, 1989; Darling-Hammond, 1991; Mohr, 1992). Furthermore, the multiple sources of data increased reliability by establishing a chain of evidence. To ensure consistency, as well as a systematic process, the researcher followed a process outlined by Krueger (1994). The following steps were followed:

- Sequencing questions to allow maximum insight, starting with general questions and leading into key questions. Then, following up to provide opportunity for clarification and participant verification
- Capturing and handling data both electronically and manually in order to ensure proper reconstruction of critical parts of the focus group
- Coding and labeling ideas as they reappear
- Participant verification which allows participants to respond to summaries of data during the focus groups
- Debriefing between the researcher and the person assisting, to highlight

similarities and contrasts, and to share preliminary and final reports.

Efforts were made to conduct procedures in an organized, efficient and professional manner. Care was taken to remain neutral, and not misrepresent or manipulate any of the data. This was important, as case studies are built on the participants' perspectives, their words and their meaning (Krueger, 1997).

The Study Period: Focus group data and personal interviews were completed approximately eight months prior to the conclusion of this study. The documentary data sources (i.e., student achievement data, profiles of students, parents, staff, and archival) covered a three-year period. School profile and student outcome data were readily available and accessible for the three previous years (1995, 1996 and 1997). Using the three-year study period also helped to meets Yin's requirements that a case study be contemporary.

Limitations: One of the limitations of case studies is that results cannot be generalized to a broader population. Additionally, as indicated by Krueger (1996), the use of focus groups can present limitations in that the researcher has less control over participants. The structure of focus groups makes it easy for participants to interact and influence each other. Difficulties can also arise in assembling the groups, and special skills are required by moderators. Data can be difficult to analyze from such a setting, and care must be taken to interpret data within the same context it was given.

Chapter IV

Analysis of the Data

This study is intended to provide insight into why students at two inner city schools, who are matched in most respects, achieve at different levels. While one school has been recognized as one of the best elementary schools in America, the other has not been able to attain the same level of success.

The basic question being posed in this study is: **"To what extent is there variation in the perceptions of teachers, students, parents and principals at two inner city schools on eight factors which have been linked to school effectiveness?"** As noted, the primary method used to generate data was focus groups. In addition, other sources of data included interviews with the principals associated with each school, and available documentary sources. Participants were asked to share their perceptions, attitudes and opinions on the following school effectiveness factors: 1) school orderliness and safety, 2) school mission, 3) opportunity to learn and time on task; 4) monitoring student progress, 5) school leadership; 6) parent involvement; 7) teacher expectation, and 8) school resources.

Analysis is derived from the transcription of participants' words on the factors listed above. A disciplined process, suggested by Krueger (1998), was used to code and associate participants' responses to specific measurements and indicators of each correlate of an effective school (see chapter I). Ultimately, this process was used to identify specific patterns and emerging themes which may account for some of the differences in findings between the two schools. Findings are presented in an interpretive narrative

based on participants' responses. It should be noted that some of the questions were appropriate only for teachers and principals to answer. Therefore, all groups did not respond to each question.

Visiting the Schools: Prior to the focus groups, the researcher visited each school. In terms of physical conditions, both schools were very neat, well organized, clean and orderly. The high achieving school showed a lot of people activity. It was difficult to distinguish parents from teachers. Students were helpful in providing directions to the principal's office, and the same students started to question the purpose of the visit. Noticeably, in the comparison school, there was less visible activity and there were not as many parents in the school.

How Principals of Each School View Factors of Effectiveness:

Safe and Orderly Environment:

Perceptions of principals regarding the safety and orderliness of their environments were similar. Each mentioned the use of a system wide tracking program for monitoring and controlling incidents. Each also mentioned that everyone in their individual schools is involved in safety.

Their perceptions did differ, however, on the specific factors that pertain to school safety. Whereas the principal from the high achieving school mentioned some amenities which would be nice, such as a new cafeteria, the principal from the comparison school was more concerned about some needed environmental changes to enhance safety. She also expressed concern about the behaviors and involvement of parents.

In their own words, they described what would make their environments safer in

the following manner:

> *The High Achieving School:*
> *The Principal's Perceptions on Safe and Orderly Environment:*
>
> We could use a nicer cafeteria; i.e., an enclosed area for students to eat which would eliminate so much noise. Our acoustics could be better.
>
> *The Comparison School:*
> *The Principal's Perceptions on Safe and Orderly Environment:*
>
> What would make it better is being able to control the flow of traffic on school grounds, additional fencing; consistent community participation, and parents adhering more to rules.

School Mission:

The principals from both the high achieving and comparison schools cited similar missions, expressing their commitment to creating an environment so that all students can learn. However, they expressed themselves differently in terms of implementation, and the amount of detail which was provided. Whereas the principal from the high achieving school provided specific details to explain how the mission is implemented by focusing on the whole child and involving and appreciating people, the principal from the comparison school did not provide explicit details. Their individual responses are provided below:

> *The High Achieving School:*
> *The Principal's Perceptions on Mission:*
>
> Our mission is to create a caring learning environment where we enthusiastically work toward effective outcomes. We are a Cozi school.

Therefore, we look at the whole child. Teachers and staff actively adopt children for the purpose of helping them achieve at school. We take children home for the weekends; we take them to all types of social functions (getting ready to take them to see the Globetrotters). We offer as much extra support as possible from the staff. Other ways in which we implement our mission include: recognizing and appreciating people; people are important; parents events; testing outcomes; relationships with central office staff that works with small individualized groups; peer observation - working with other teams - learning from each other, and working with teachers in other schools.

The Comparison School:
The Principal's Perception on Mission:

Our mission is to create an environment and the conditions of learning where children are encouraged and directed in developing individual strengths, interests, and academic ability. It is implemented through our expectations which are set at the beginning of the year. There are common goals, and the communication is that we are here to teach children and uphold expectations. We say the mission statement daily and we just do it, and we are flexible."

Opportunity to Learn and Time On Task: There were noticeable differences in the principals' perceptions as they described how they allocate time for learning and related tasks. For example, the principal from the high achieving school described a free-flowing and flexible day that is very busy and exciting, with lots of people and special events (all related to the identified goals and objectives). In contrast, the comparison school principal spoke about structure; i.e., monitoring students; managing by walking around, making sure everything flows in a certain direction, and visiting each classroom

everyday to observe teachers, and make sure they are engaged in planned learning activities.

In terms of making sure that students are mastering the key subject areas, both principals spoke of the importance of monitoring. However, whereas the principal from the high achieving school spoke of various activities and a host of different persons involved in the monitoring process, the principal from the comparison school spoke basically about her own personal involvement, and did not mention teachers, student services teams, parents, social workers, etc., as did the principal from the high achieving school. A summary of their responses is provided below:

> *The High Achieving School:*
> *The Principal's Perceptions on Opportunity to Learn and Time On Task:*
>
> A typical day at our school is one that's very busy, exciting, special events, parents and teacher programs, parent education, working with families, pre-schoolers coming in twice a month for special presentations, special awards, PTA, morning announcements, closed captions video in the mornings to make face to face connection with students, seeing lots of children, accelerated readers, students earning points for progress, character and education words to promote twelve traits (honesty, respect, children sharing stories), etc."
>
> "In making sure that students are mastering the key subject areas, we follow the City's School Initiative and Accountability Program. We diagnose in September and January to measure students' points of growth. We get in-house scores. It is the responsibility of teachers to know where children are, how they are doing, and how to address problems. Any noted problems are referred to grade

level teams. For third graders, and fifth graders, we have monitoring; where board members in the Central Office can pull folders and evaluate student progress. There are also student services teams. If teachers see no progress, student services team (teachers, parents and guidance counselors, social workers, diagnostician) can present case for special diagnosis and make recommendations. There is never enough time; I would love to spend more time in classrooms."

The Comparison School:
The Principal's Perceptions on Opportunity to Learn and Time On Task:

There is no typical day; things flow in a certain direction, however. The principal arrives; walks around, makes sure that substitutes are in place. Everyday is different. Start monitoring students, making sure they come into school in a safe and orderly manner; duty time announcements - breakfast, announcements, video-audio so students can see principal's face everyday - welcome the students to school. We have the academic problem of the day: reading/mathematics - announce winners; sing - Math song of the month - Sing promise song - I Am A Promise With A Capital P. To make sure that students are mastering the key subject areas, I manage by walking around (I call it 'MBWA'). I visit a lot, walk around; observe in classrooms; try to visit every classroom everyday. At the end of day, call teachers in for observational report. Always have own personal mission in mind; have own little navigation in place - use tag team approach with assistant principal; have expectations and support. What would make it better would be more time. We could always use more time; strict standardization for ensuring enough time is devoted to key subjects. More time and less interruptions would make it better.

Monitoring of Student Progress:

In sharing their perceptions on monitoring, both principals spoke similarly on the importance of frequent monitoring and the steps involved, including the evaluation processes, frequent observations, feedback and reviews. The only noticeable difference was in the general tone of their comments. The principal from the high achieving school spoke in terms of a collaborative process to make better connections and see the whole picture. In contrast, the principal from the comparison school spoke in terms of the need to ensure strict standardization. A summary of their comments is listed below:

The High Achieving School:
The Principal's Perceptions on Monitoring of Student Progress:

To monitor teacher performance and student progress, each grade level has regular meetings to evaluate scope, sequence, specific objectives. I am satisfied with these methods but we can always grow. We will start to monitor across grade levels for better connections to get whole pictures to observe strong points of students, weakness, etc. In this way, we will see how things affect each other.

The Comparison School:
The Principal's Perceptions on Monitoring of Student Progress:

There is lots of monitoring - baseline reading tests every nine weeks: retesting - asking questions as to why or why not appropriate growth. Taking it before the team - frequent monitoring and personal tests. We need to know if students are on grade level or not, in order to communicate with parents and not confuse them. We also need to make sure students are earning grades. Strict standardization for ensuring enough time is devoted to key subjects. I'm satisfied, and there's always room for improvement; progress reports are done to talk about children and evaluation of teachers

and principal.

Leadership:

The principals' perceptions of their roles as leaders were different. The principal at the high achieving school provided an expanded description of her role, and her involvement and interaction with everyone in the entire school community. She spoke of flexibility, visibility, nurturing and being a part of the process. In contrast, the principal from the comparison school provided a short and concise description of her role as being that of achieving balance. Their responses are provided below:

The High Achieving School:
The Principal's Perceptions on Leadership:

I see myself as the leader of building, nurturer for staff, positive sharing of strengths, flexible approaches as long as objectives are being met; cooperative work with staff; not forgetting what it was like as a teacher - seeing teachers' perspectives; high visibility for parents, students, teachers, being a part of the process; people knowing they can come to me and talk; being open; not above doing anything it takes to get the job done. My leadership philosophy is doing anything it takes to get the job done.

The Comparison School:
The Principal's Perceptions on Leadership:

My role is that of achieving balance between being an instructional leader and a manager. My leadership philosophy is that children are designed for accomplishment, and engineered for success and endowed with seeds of greatness - Honor in children, families and teachers.

Parent Involvement:

Both principals described a wide range of activities in which parents are involved. However, whereas the principal from the high achieving school indicated there are always lots of parents in and out of the building, the principal from the comparison school said, "parent involvement is welcomed." They both also expressed some concern in this area. The principal from the high achieving school indicated that the parental involvement program would have to be reassessed because so many parents have been able to find jobs and return to work.

The principal from the comparison school indicated that the high rate of household mobility creates a problem in that there are high percentages of transient parents, as well as transient students. In their own words, they reported the following:

> *The High Achieving School:*
> *The Principal's Perceptions on Parent Involvement:*
>
> There are always lots of parents in and out of the building. However, lots of parents have returned to work or are in school. There are still many involved, but in different ways. Although many parents do not have the time they used to have, we encourage them to come in if only for 10-15 minutes before or after work, or during lunch just to make the connection. Parents are invited to come for assemblies, honor roll assemblies. In pre kindergarten, parents must drop off and pick up children, so at that level, parents are seen daily. Other parents' activities include: citizenship awards, special awards, after school performances, parent workshops during the day, after care programs, girls' club, open forum; classroom volunteers. What would make it better would be to actively reassess parental program and look at what is needed and what wanted by parents -

goals, decision making.

The Comparison School:
The Principal's Perceptions on Parent Involvement:

Parent involvement is welcomed. We want parents in school and we want them to feel comfortable, as there are productive reasons for parents to be involved. The parents' place is in the school with their children. Parent activities include: Parents' Gospel Choir, Parents As Teachers, First Book Workshop, Urban Discovery Ministries Learning Center, SOL Math Grade Three Family Dinner, Family Math and Science Night, Soul Food Family Night, Tutoring - working hand in hand, Eagle Newsletter, positive communication with parents, parents' hour of power, carnival/fun day, staff and parent variety show, and Santa's gift shop.

There is much connectiveness with parents, children, social services - a community blend; family intervention. We have to deal with homelessness. The school has a 43 percent stability rate; we only keep about half our original students by end of year. To deal with problems, teachers often move up with students so they will have some stability. What would make it better would be more student and parent stability in neighborhood, and less mobility.

Teacher Expectations:

Perceptions from both principals suggested they feel all children can learn regardless of the environmental conditions. However, there were differences in the way the principals perceived and implemented high teacher expectations. The principal from the high achieving school spoke of teachers addressing the whole child, making sure the child is ready to learn, making sure that all parts of the environment fit, and making

people feel welcome to be a part of the school. She also indicated that they focus on neighborhood problems and whatever else the students need to deal with in order to get them ready to learn.

In contrast, the principal from the comparison school spoke of outcomes and the need for teachers and parents to be accountable and follow standards. She also indicated that despite high teacher expectations, student outcomes remain a problem. She deals with such problems by holding teachers accountable, and making sure that teachers are attentive to all students and not just the bright students. In their own words, they expressed the following:

> *The High Achieving School:*
> *The Principal's Perceptions on Teacher Expectations:*
>
> We get what we expect. If teachers blame home environment, then there's no reason to push for achievement or success. To handle the environment of our children, we address the whole child so that we can make sure that the children are ready to learn. We talk about neighborhood problems; kids talk about what they need to do to forge ahead. We take time to look at the whole child. Too many people still have stereotypes - but that can all be fixed. The children can rise as high as you expect them to. The minimal is not acceptable. To create a positive and successful environment, we strive to make all parts of the environment fit - making people feel welcome to come in and be a part of our school.

> *The Comparison School:*
> *The Principal's Perceptions on Teacher Expectations:*
>
> Every child can learn, but our outcomes are a concern. Expectations are very subtle things to get to and observe. When I visit classrooms, I try to

observe to whom teachers are teaching. I pay close attention to see if teachers are teaching to bright students, and ignoring slower students. Teachers have to know they are accountable. There are standards in teaching that must be observed and followed. Teachers must be endowed in high expectations. We need accountability from parents as well as teachers. There must be a certain amount of parent accountability and parent expectation. Parents must get children to school. We must have a blended balance from parents as well as teachers.

Resources:

The principals' responses regarding resources were similar. Both indicated they have what they need. The principal from the high achieving school, however, specifically indicated that the community and churches are there for them, supporting their efforts in attaining whatever the school needs. The principal from the comparison school simply stated that parents, the community, and the businesses are resources. She did not elaborate on the role of parents, the community and businesses. A summary of their comments is presented below.

The High Achieving School:
The Principal's Perceptions on Resources:

To obtain resources, we are good at asking. Our philosophy for getting resources is asking and you shall receive. We find the right people, and make connections. We get a lot of church support; community support; the church and the community solicit donations for us, i.e., Father/Child Banquet.

The Comparison School:
The Principal's Perceptions on Resources:

There is always an issue with money. Then again, we have everything we need. We have a talented and dedicated staff. The parents are resources; the community, the churches, the businesses. We learn to do our very best - everything is in place. It depends on how we pull it together - creativity.

Summary of Principals' Perceptions:

Based on the perceptions of the principals, it is obvious that each has a thorough understanding of school effectiveness practices. Each also provided answers which were consistent with the theoretical indicators of school effectiveness. There was a difference, however, in perceptions regarding their overall approach and execution of school activities. An analysis of their comments suggests that the high achieving school operates in an open and flexible environment that stresses shared goals, and common purposes. Additionally, the principal from the high achieving school spoke of nurturing relationships, social interactions, and the development of productive working relationships and processes. Other examples include her focus on the whole child, the need for high visibility, flexibility, the involvement of parents, churches, and the community. She also spoke of exciting days which are filled with fun, activity and people (as long as the goals are being met), being a part of the process, and doing whatever it takes to accomplish their goals. These comments from the principal at the high achieving school were consistent with other research which stresses the importance of productive relationships and processes that foster learning (Leithwood, Leonard, and Sharratt, 1998). In the high achieving school, the principal also provided more explicit details regarding critical

aspects of school effectiveness. The implication was that persons in the high achieving school perceive these aspects as being important components in the school's achievements.

In contrast, the principal from the comparison school spoke extensively of structure and control, and the impact of negative conditions in the environment. She did not speak of relationships, teams, or processes as being amongst those factors which are used to accomplish goals. Instead, she spoke of her *daily* visits to every classroom to make sure teachers are doing jobs; holding teachers accountable, the monitoring of students, managing by walking around, desire for parents to adhere to rules and regulations. The principal's focus on structure could be an important implication for the comparison school. Research indicates that although structure is an important feature in school management, it is also important for schools, and particularly low income schools, to vary in the ways they respond to the needs of students, parents, and other staff (Holdaway, 1997).

Also notable is that the principal from the comparison school spoke extensively of the negative social impacts and the instability of the school community, where there are two homeless shelters. Because the school is in the vicinity of the shelters, where parents and children come on and go on a frequent basis, there is a high mobility rate (46 percent) for students in the comparison school. This means that 46 percent of the student population is transient throughout a given school year (compared to 26 percent in the high achieving school). These factors could have important implications for this study. Such environmental factors, according to the research literature, can represent substantial issues which affect schooling (Parker, et al., 1998).

The Former Principal of the High Achieving School:

A personal interview was also conducted with the former principal of the high achieving school (who had served as principal for sixteen years prior to the 1997/1998 school year). He shared perceptions relative to the school's history in mobilizing community and parental support, which in his opinion, has overwhelmingly contributed to the high achieving school's success. In response to the question, "What is the history behind the school's success," the following narrative provides the response in his own words.

> Parental Involvement:
>
> Our parents were our greatest resources. Not only did we go out and recruit parents into our school, we held workshops to empower them. Parents must know that they are needed, they are welcomed, and they have power. We made sure parents knew it was a competitive world out there and we needed their help in order to attain success. We called it parent power. We made sure they knew that we and the entire board of education worked for them. The workshops taught parents awareness, strength, knowledge, stamina - how to use the newspapers to be informed and knowledgeable, how to obtain factual information, how to use the news media to help get what they wanted and needed, how to address the school board, how to speak in public, how to speak with authority, how to be constructively angry if and when they got angry, how to always work with the facts, the use of body language, self control, and effective questioning. We also brought in businesses to train and recruit parents for meaningful employment. Once we were able to train parents in these areas, the parents went to battle for the school, and anything the school wanted or needed, the parents worked to get it. In presentations to the school board, the parents did all the

talking."

The community:

Not only did we let the parents know we needed them, we also went to the community at night and talked to the people who lived in the community and even the persons who hung out on the corners. We told them who we were and what we needed from them. I told them how important the community was to the school, and how we needed their help and cooperation to look out for the children and support the school.

The Churches:

One of the local churches became our "Partner in Education." They worked with us, came in and held classes when it was necessary. They supported our children in every possible way. We knew 'It takes a Village,' and we set out to get the whole neighborhood involved.

Local Politicians:

We also made a point to recruit the local politicians: got them to join our board; made sure they knew us and that we knew them and their agenda. We were determined not to let anything or anyone stop us. If someone was perceived to be our enemy, we sought to make them our friend.

Another question which was presented to the former principal was, "What did you expect from your teachers and staff?" He responded:

> Most people want to do their 8:00 - 4:00 jobs and go home. In order to be successful, you must be willing to persist and endure, and you have to hold everyone accountable for results. Sometimes we create our own barriers. We can overcome anything if we want to. Just don't be afraid of anything. Nothing is so challenging that it can prevent success. I would tell the

> teachers to teach as if they were teaching their own children, and look for the results. They knew they were being held strictly accountable and responsible for students' success. If the child was four years behind, they knew it was their responsibility to bring them up to par regardless of what it took. The philosophy was: NO FAULT, NO EXCUSES. I made a point of asking for progress reports every four weeks. If the child had not improved, then I expected the teachers to be able to explain why, and have specific plans for the child's improvement. I would go back the next four weeks and review the child's progress again.

The final question which was presented to the former principal was, "Why do you believe the other black community schools have not been able to attain the same level of success?" He responded, "they are not visible enough."

Analysis of the Focus Groups Data:

The following section presents a comparative analyses of focus group responses by teachers. parents and students on each of the correlate areas. The analysis is based on the actual words of participants, and at the end of each analysis, there is a summary of the comments which were voiced by participants.

Safe and Orderly Environment:

Teachers' Perceptions: The general perception held by teachers who responded at the high achieving school was that their environment is very safe. and that they have specific measures in place to ensure safety. Among the detailed perspectives which were voiced. the central themes shared by teachers at the high achieving school was that they ensure safety through the following means:

- Awareness
- Discipline
- Rules
- Preventive programs
- Feedback
- Collaboration and a team approach where everyone is involved

In contrast, one teacher at the comparison school described the environment as fairly safe. The other teacher indicated she felt safe, and also alluded to crime and problems in the neighborhood which effect students, as well as problems in previous years at the school. With the exception of keeping their doors locked, neither respondent at the comparison school shared a lot of detail regarding specific programs which are, or are not, in place to ensure safety. Unlike the high achieving school, they also did not share perceptions on how students are involved in safety.

A compilation of responses from both groups of teachers regarding the safety and orderliness of their environments is provided below.

The High Achieving School:
The Teachers' Perceptions on Safe and Orderly Environment:

> I think our school is very safe; we have protocols and measures and they are followed. Incidents are addressed immediately, and there are lots of measures taken to make sure it's safe. Doors are locked; there are discussions; i.e., an ounce of prevention and lots of preventive strategies. We are proactive, and we make sure the children understand, and that they are aware. Students are a big part of safety and they are really involved in the process. We impress upon children that certain things are not

appropriate; i.e., ramps not safe; if children run, they get hurt. We get a lot of feedback of incidents at other places, and what needs to be done for preventive measures. Our leaders ensure that feedback is used as a preventive factor. We also use teamwork and camaraderie in approaching students for running in halls, etc. Any teacher feels free to speak to any student."

The Comparison School:
The Teachers' Perceptions on Safe and Orderly Environment:

The school is fairly safe; I'm not a part of the neighborhood, but I am comfortable in the school environment. I go by my students' homes and I feel you have to get involved with the students and their lives. You are only as safe as you feel. And I feel safe. Children tell us that they were up all night because people were shooting in the neighborhood. It's a lot safer than it used to be. I don't feel in any danger when I'm at school. There was just one serious incident more than a year ago. We keep our doors locked, and everyone has to ring a bell, but ultimately we usually open the door. It's difficult to monitor.

The Parents' Perceptions on Safe and Orderly Environment:

The overall perception amongst parents who responded at the high achieving school was that they know their children are safe at school because they are at the school every day and they see what's going on. However, some of the parents did express concern about the overall safety of the neighborhood.

In contrast, parents' perceptions at the comparison school suggested great concern

regarding the overall safety of the neighborhood. These parents did not speak about the safety of the school, however. Instead, they expressed the need for specific measures to better ensure a safe and orderly environment for their children.

A summary of parents comments from both schools are provided below:

The High Achieving School:
The Parents' Perceptions on Safe and Orderly Environment:

Yes, we know they are in a safe and clean environment because we are here every day and we are around the building; we see what's going on. We are visible. Sometimes on the way to school, there are problems. When they get to the school, the main concern is the safety of the children. Teachers, parents and staff go out of their way to make sure children are safe.

The Comparison School:
The Parents' Perceptions on Safe and Orderly Environment:

No, the children are not safe when they are on their way to school. We need more parents, volunteers, and police officers to monitor children on their way to school. Children are often harassed on the way to school. They are harassed by older children who are not in school, wine-o's, drug addicts. We need busing so children in middle schools will not have to walk so far. There are often fights. These are our major concerns. This is a rough neighborhood; every other house abandoned, we have a lot of transients, and it's not a stable community. We don't get the backing as in some communities. Other neighborhoods like BP have housing projects which make housing more accessible and stable for them. People stay

there, and people in those communities are better off.

The Students' Perceptions on Safe and Orderly Environment:

Perceptions among the students who responded at the high achieving school indicated they feel safe at their school, and they are aware of the need for safety. Student respondents at the high achieving school also indicated they trust their teachers and principals to look out for them.

In contrast, the overall perception of students who responded at the comparison school was they did not feel particularly safe in their environment. Some students expressed concerns about fights within the school, as well as crime around the neighborhood. Perceptions from both groups indicated that the only thing that would make them feel safer would be to have police officers in the school. Comments from students at both schools are provided below:

> *The High Achieving School:*
> *The Students' Perceptions on Safe and Orderly Environment:*
>
> When I walk into my school, I feel great, excited, happy to be here, feel good about self, this school makes us feel good about ourselves. We feel great, good, happy, excellent, beautiful, fantastic. Nobody feels different; we feel this way every day. The teachers, and the principals make us feel safe and the police will come right over. Teachers and principals go outside with us to make sure we are okay. Sometimes some people who don't belong here might come, so we lock our doors. The only thing that would make us feel safer is to have police officers in the school.

The Comparison School:
The Students' Perceptions on Safe and Orderly Environment:

I feel happy, joyful, and excited. I feel upset, mad, happy because school is almost out; I don't like it because it's too much homework; I don't feel safe at school because strangers might come in and kidnap us. People will jump you in school. People can come in - rapists and strangers. People escape from prison. Strangers come in and use the restrooms sometimes.

Clear and Focused Mission:

Teachers' Responses: Generally, the perceptions shared by teachers from both schools emphasized that they are very involved with the children, and that the focus is on the children. In the high achieving school, however, teachers emphasized that they have shared understanding, and collaboration, and they work with parents and the community to implement their school mission. There appeared also to be a difference in the attitudes of the teachers regarding how they perceive the many activities which are involved in implementing their school missions. Teachers who responded at the high achieving school appeared to be enthusiastic and confident about their responsibilities. They spoke about their mission with much clarity and with passion. When asked about their mission, teachers at the high achieving school echoed in unison: "We very enthusiastically focus on effective outcomes and use our passion for teaching to focus on the whole child: whatever the child needs, that child gets."

Teachers from the comparison school, however, voiced some frustration regarding

the many activities and programs which are involved in implementing their mission. One of the teachers made comments about the school's structure, while the other spoke of what the school would need to do in order to succeed.

Examples of the comments of teachers from both schools are provided below:

The *High Achieving School:*
The Teachers' Perceptions on Clear and Focused Mission:

> We are a Cozi School (i.e., we focus on the physical, and mental development and the whole child); the child must be ready to learn; everyone is involved in knowing and implementing our mission; teachers come to school focused on teaching; we use a holistic approach, we listen to students and prepare them for learning; there are life long lessons, making sure learning goes on; we involve parents, community, and churches. We use guided principles: we collaborate; we are a team; we ask; we share; we learn from each other; we do whatever it takes; we use consensus: our philosophy is 'I can; I will; I must; there is no fault.

The Comparison School:
The Teachers Perceptions on Clear and Focused Mission:

> We have a structured environment and the mission reflects that. We are very involved with the children, their education, and we get opportunity to contribute as a team. There is a lot going on; new programs all the time, and it's sometimes difficult to keep track of everything. It can be good, but it can be very frustrating, and it's even hard for the kids who are very adept. You have to go far and beyond your area of responsibility if the children are going to succeed. You have to be willing to give up your evenings and weekends, or arrange with your support systems to help you

do those things. There must be many retired people who would volunteer some time. That's what I plan to do this summer.

(Note: The teachers were the only respondents in the area of school mission. Parents and students were not asked to respond).

Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task:

Teachers' Perceptions: Perceptions from teachers who responded at the high achieving school indicated that they thrive on a wide range of activities which provide opportunities for students to learn. Teachers from the high achieving school also stressed flexibility and diversity, indicating they do whatever it takes to help students succeed. Additionally, the teachers indicated they use a holistic and team player approach to ensure that sufficient time is devoted to key subjects, and that students have ample opportunity to master the intended curriculum. Also of importance in the high achieving school was that teachers specifically mentioned that teaching is related to the students' backgrounds, and connections are made to real life.

The perspectives of teachers who responded at the comparison school indicated they experience a lot of frustration because of the wide range of activities in which they must be involved to ensure opportunities to learn and time on task. In their responses, the comparison school teachers provided more bits and pieces, versus explicit details, or concrete examples. Both teachers also voiced concerns regarding what the school needs in terms of resources. Many of their suggestions for improvement were similar to programs which teachers at the high achieving school indicated they already have in place. Interestingly, one comparison school teacher indicated that "students are pretty compliant."

Teachers who responded from both schools described their learning environments for students in the following way:

The High Achieving School:
Teachers' Perceptions on Time on Task and Opportunity to Learn:

Our learning environment is interesting, and flexible; subjects are intermingled and connections are made to real life, and teaching is related to the students' backgrounds; we use a cooperative, and team teaching approach which is flexible and is designed so that teachers do whatever it takes to make sure children are learning, and time on task is different every day, and different for every teacher. We combine classes when necessary, and get much support from the principal. Discipline is minimal, and there is also much support from the principal in this area. This is a key factor in time on task. We are flexible, and quick to utilize our resources and to ask for help from cooperative and supportive peers and leaders.

The Comparison School:
Teachers' Perceptions on Time on Task and Opportunity to Learn:

I try to make it interesting. Students are pretty compliant. It's very difficult to get everything in. There is pressure; so much going on all the time which makes it difficult to get everything in, and there are some interruptions which get them off task where you have to sit students by themselves. Sometimes I feel it's like going to a doctor - writing components, reading components, test taking. You just don't really have the time. It's kind of a rush job. I'm satisfied with the amount of time, but don't think there should be time limitations for things like fractions. You simply can't finish certain things in a given amount of time - like the end of January. There is much re-teaching.
Re-teaching is encouraged, but the time is still not available - have to get

everything in by the end of the year. We have guidelines, but too much material. It is not realistic - there are times when you just don't finish teaching what you have to teach. If you teach it well, you can't get to everything. What would make it better is not having to teach so much. There is so much going on. We do a good job, but it's a lot of pressure; too much stuff to teach. Within the past couple of years, everything has doubled - science/math. I think it should be more of a team teaching approach - one person doing social studies, another science. Let those who are best in those subjects teach them. It's hard to find time to do all the things. We do experiments, but there's not enough time. We can't do the lengthy projects because we would really fall behind. So you just do what you can -the experiments, the book work. You really need to get those experiments in so they will really understand. It takes a lot of after school time. It falls into family time. I always try to relate the subject matter to the students themselves; divide them up to teach them fractions, etc. You can't have children sitting for very long.

Students' Perceptions:

In both schools, students who responded could talk easily about what they do in their classrooms. In each school, student perceptions varied widely between and among students in each school regarding what subjects they liked best, and least, and the subjects that take the longest to teach. Those students who responded in the high achieving school indicated that mathematics, reading and language arts and social studies were the subjects that take longest to teach. They also indicated that writing takes a long time.

At the comparison school, those students who responded felt that communication and social studies take the longest to teach "because there is a lot to know." The key difference in perceptions between students at the two schools was in the way students

described their after school activities:

The High Achieving School:
Students' Perceptions on Time on Task and Opportunity to Learn:

We stay after school for extended day program to practice and get ready for the test; we take computer courses at Norfolk State; we stay after school to get ready for programs; after care, detention, double dutch, girl scout, band, football, track, and the girls' club.

The Comparison School:
The Students' Perceptions on Time on Task and Opportunity to Learn:

Sometimes we stay after school for homework club, to play, and for "scubby dub" discipline duty.

Monitoring of Performance:

Teachers' Perceptions: The teachers who responded at both schools clearly expressed an awareness of the need to frequently monitor and review achievement standards, thus showing consistency with the effectiveness indicators involved in this correlate. Teachers at the comparison school expressed an awareness and understanding of what's involved in monitoring. However, one of the teacher's comments implied she may place limitations on the students, or may have low expectations of them. A compilation of responses from both the high achieving and the comparison schools appears below:

The High Achieving School:
Teachers' Perceptions on Monitoring:

We look at them (students) constantly, observe the actions of students,

make adjustments, record keeping, re-teaching, retesting, monitoring, changing, adjusting; whatever is necessary. We are involved in re-teaching, retesting; testing at beginning, middle, and end of the year to see what progress has been made. Evaluation is easy this way.

The Comparison School:
Teachers' Perceptions on Monitoring:

We constantly check. There is a lot of re-teaching and redirecting. I don't give them a lot of work. In math, I give just six or seven problems so we can have time to go over the work. I make the work very manageable. I've had my children for two years, and I know what they need. I know who to check up on in each subject. If you know your children, it's much easier to monitor. I check all homework, but I don't give that much. I don't bogg them down. It's hard to get homework back.

Leadership:

Teachers' Perceptions: Teachers from both schools described some positive characteristics in their leaders. Teachers responding at each school also indicated that the only weakness in their leader is that they try to do too much and there's so much going on all the time. Teachers' perceptions at the high achieving school, however, were overwhelmingly positive, without exception. Additionally, the responses at the high achieving school suggested there is a strong integrated approach to leadership. During the interviews with teachers at the high achieving school, three of them expressed disappointment that the focus group questions did not make mention of the assistant

principal. They considered the assistant principal as a very visible, and a very strong part of the dynamic leadership team in their school. They described their leaders as the motivating force, whose roles included leading, educating, mobilizing, inspiring and enabling the entire school community.

Both teachers in the comparison school described their leaders in a positive manner, and each listed complimentary attributes about their principal. They also made statements which suggested there are various limitations and obstacles their leaders face. The major difference in perceptions between the two schools was that the high achieving school spoke of and described an "integrated approach" which they feel is used in their school, whereas teachers at the comparison school did not allude to any particular leadership style for their leaders.

The following is a narrative of the actual words of teachers from both schools:

> *The High Achieving School: Teachers' Perceptions on Leadership*:
>
> It's an administration, a balance, a team, a partnership; an ideal match in our principal and assistant principal; a visible force; a conglomerate; togetherness; a partnership; a good act; good leadership; strong and assertive when they have to be, and sensitive and supportive to teachers and students; a perfect blend of a strong fatherly role model figure who the students and faculty relate to, and an enthusiastic, happy to be here kind of woman whose ready to deal with whatever situation arises. The only weakness is they try to do too much - too many things going on.

The Comparison School:
Teachers' Perceptions on Leadership:

The assistant principal is quiet; the principal is outgoing, and she uses a lot of humor, and is very upbeat. The principal comes in and observes. They help us out with personal problems and they are very understanding, and help out with problems in the classrooms. Their hands are often tied, but they are in our corner. I'm real comfortable with them. They are supportive. If you are having problems, she will get right on the phone with the parents. Their greatest strengths are that they communicate very well. One is very organized and one is a good coordinator and coordinates all the classroom stuff. They both know all the kids by name. They do the best they can with what they have. Principalship is a difficult job and they do a pretty good job.

Parents' Perceptions on Leadership: Some of the parents who responded on leadership at the high achieving school indicated they were most pleased with the present leadership at their school. However, there were various shifts in opinions, as others expressed concern that the former principal, whom they perceived as a very strong and dynamic force was no longer at the school. While some described some good characteristics in the present school leaders, others indicated they missed the former principal (who was at the school for sixteen years prior to this past school year). One parent referred to the former principal as "the rock," and others agreed. Another parent indicated, "I don't want this ship to sink . . . ; we need a strong captain to continue, and sometimes I don't think she's (present principal) strong enough." Two other parents disagreed with the concerns of this parents. The parents who disagreed indicated they

were not worried because the present principal had been a part of the process under the former principal's regime, and they felt confident she would continue to focus school goals and efforts in the same direction.

Parents at the comparison school also paid compliments to their leaders, indicating they are visible, supportive and good listeners. Similar to a comment from one of the teachers, one parent testified that the principal is in the classrooms every day, and that she gets on the phone with parents whenever necessary. Another parent described leadership in a wider context, indicating that "everyone is a leader, and the parents are the heart of the school."

The High Achieving School:
Parents' Perceptions on Leadership:

> The most important thing is the children. The principals are creative and innovative. They work well with us. You can believe what they say. They are real, and they care about what we care about. They are very thorough and are effective listeners. They are very cordial and they always get back to us. They always have time. The principal and assistant principal work very well with us.
>
> The assistant principal does a pretty good job. He is very thorough when he has a situation. He is an effective listener. He shows concern, and he's cordial and he always gets back to you. He's a professional. I have no problem with the principal. She takes time and listens, and she handles the situation.
>
> I'm concerned. Everything is not perfect. Things could be handled better. Sometimes I feel she is not strong enough of a captain to lead this

ship where it needs to go. I don't want this ship to sink. I want it to keep sailing across the ocean and if she isn't strong enough to handle this ship, I want her to move along and let someone else handle the job. "Amen."

I'm not worried with the new leadership because a strong system was already in place from the beginning. Before Dr. C left, we had become accustomed to working with Mrs. G. We had already bonded with her and she was just as visible and as available as the assistant principal as she is now. Ms. G has made a conscious effort to keep things flowing and to make it better. We would have been concerned if a totally new principal had come to replace Dr. C. Both Dr. C. And Ms. G's strong points are that they are people oriented.

The Comparison School:
Parents' Perceptions of Leadership:

The principal and assistant principal are visible, and they are always here for us. The principal is a very busy lady; she's in the classrooms, and she's highly motivated. She listens very well and tries to deal with the situation; she doesn't wait for PTA. When we go to her, she takes time and listens to us. One parent also expressed a broader view, indicating, Everyone is a leader: the music teacher, the art teachers, the academic teachers; we have a great parent coordinator who brings in speakers with good topics; everyone makes up the whole for this school and everyone caters to the students and works well together. Parents are actually the heart of the school."

Students' Perceptions of Leadership:

While the overall consensus of students' perceptions at the high achieving school suggested they liked their school leaders, and that they have good relationships with them, some of the students at the comparison school were not as complimentary. In

essence, there were major differences in the way the two groups of students described their leadership. In their own words, student responses from both schools included the following:

The High Achieving School:
Students' Perceptions of Leadership:

The principal and assistant principal are nice. They participate in fun and games with us. We taught her how to double dutch. They take us on trips, and they look out for us. Ms. G is a really nice person, but when you're bad, she's still nice, but she can be mean. She supports the school, and we can go to her with problems. She gets tutors, field trips and she does a lot. They are nice and friendly. Another said, "I like them, but we miss Dr. C In response to what does the principal talks about, some of the student responses included, conflicts, personal hygiene, gives us compliments, family life, keeping the body clean; ensuring our safety, making sure we wear our uniforms, and they participate with us."

The Comparison School:
Students' Perceptions of Leadership:

She ignores people. She is unfair. She is rude. I like her because she gives me a vacation. I like her because . . . I don't know. I like her because she's here to make it a better place. She's helpful. She walks around, telling people to sit down. She watches over people, and suspends people. She goes in the teachers' classrooms to see how the teachers and students are doing. She represents the school to make it a better place. She asks, how have you been; how are your parents, where does your mama work; what's your address?

Teacher Expectations:

Teachers' Perceptions: The perceptions of teachers who responded at both schools indicated that any barriers to learning can be overcome. The teachers further indicated that barriers should not serve as hindrances to learning. Teachers who responded at the high achieving school expanded on their comments, and clearly indicated that they expect their students to attain all they can attain. Again, in the high achieving school, the teachers explained that they relate teaching to their students' backgrounds and experiences.

In contrast, one of the teachers at the comparison school expressed similar thoughts. Again, a comment from the other comparison school teacher implied she may place limitations on her students, and not have high expectations for them. There was also another indication as to the "transient" population at the comparison school.

The following provides a compilation of teachers' perceptions at both schools.

> *The High Achieving School:*
> *Teachers' Perceptions of Teacher Expectations:*
>
> I expect students to attain all they can attain academically. We have high expectations of students because teachers get what they expect. There are mutual respect, trust, openness, and honesty. We haven't taught until all the students have learned. Everyone who touches a child affects a child. Students rise at our level of expectations. We help students deal with their personal issues, and understand their backgrounds and experiences. We let them talk and deal about their concerns as long as it takes. Then we get on with learning. We encourage critical thinking. We relate teaching to their experiences. There are different ways to teach and different ways to learn.

The Comparison School:
Teachers' Perceptions of Teacher Expectations:

I expect them (students) to come in and not disrupt my class. I expect them to follow my rules - when that happens, all goes well. I take students home on the weekends to develop a closeness to them. I buy some of them tickets to sporting events, etc. I don't take them home on the weekends, but I treat them with respect, give them a lot of time to respond and we work on manners and how to talk to each other. I just try to work with them, give them chances and do a lot of positive enforcement and never embarrass them. Although teachers have high expectations, our test scores don't really tell you what the child is doing. This is a very transient school and it shows up in test scores, and we have two homeless shelters. Some students are here for 30-40 days and then they leave. It's hard on the children.

Parents' Perceptions of Teacher Expectations: In the high achieving school, parents who responded were positive on what they feel teachers expect from their children. Many examples were provided on how teachers are involved with students and how they often go out of their way to help students. Responses from parents in the high achieving school also indicated they are committed to the school, and to the teachers.

Teachers' perceptions at the comparison school were also positive in regards to what teachers expect from students. Important, were more statements on the high mobility rate of students, thus representing a pattern and emerging theme in the comparison school. Parents also indicated they like the teachers, but did not indicate what they liked about them.

The High Achieving School:
Parents' Perceptions of Teacher Expectations:

There are new experiences every day. Some teachers are unique; we are very pleased with one teacher who goes all out to get children involved (black history, etc.). I like what teachers do; book reports, famous persons, homework, help with homework. Some parents complain about too much homework, but I'm glad they have homework. I help the children with their work. Overall, we really like the teachers. They are wonderful. We like their dedication. They are heartfelt. The teachers even drop by during the summer. When you are involved, you get what you want out of the teacher. The "after care" program helps a lot. It is a program where students can stay after school and get some help to improve their skills. We are encouraged to ask a lot of questions, as to what our children need, and how they are doing. The teachers also keep us posted.

The Comparison School:
Parents' Perceptions of Teacher Expectations:

Once you get to know the teachers, you get the best from them. We are aesthetic with our teachers. Once I took my children out of this school and went to a better neighborhood. I came back because my children were getting a better education here. This school treats the parents better too. This school is great academically. Our problem is the mobility rates. Academics are up because of parent involvement. The teachers keep us informed and immediately address our concerns.

Students' Perceptions on Teacher Expectations: Students responding from the high achieving school indicated that their teachers have high expectations of all students.

These students stated that teachers show respect, and concern for students. Responses from students at the high achieving school also pointed to a high degree of flexibility and diversity in the kinds of activities teachers provide for them. Finally, responses from students from the high achieving school reflected that "school is fun," and they consider themselves lucky to be in such a school.

This was not the case at the comparison school where students' perspectives suggested that they do not feel valued or respected by teachers. Student responses reflected negative interactions with teachers. This negative opinion expressed by students regarding their teachers (and the previous negative comments regarding the principal) represents an emerging theme in the comparison school.

The High Achieving School:
Students' Perceptions of Teacher Expectation:

Our teachers expect us to "Do our best, and pass the test." (all the students responded in unison). They expect us to work, be on our best behavior; be on task; keep your mind on your work, all the keys, follow rules, put all work in baskets, and hand in work on time.

Yes our teachers have a lot of different ways of teaching: key links, mathematics; signal cards, signaling, answering questions; word wall, computers, colons, Piedmont and edges of Virginia. Group work is our favorite. We get into our own groups, and get to pick our own groups.

Yes, we feel comfortable in class! We like being here. Other students want to be here. What we like best is learning, working hard, physical education, being able to get your education so we can get a job when we

grow up and get a Ph.D. Other kids like this school. We are lucky to be here. The guidance counselor goes over problems. We get compliments about how we are doing in our work. We play and joke around. Teachers are funny and they are good teachers. Teachers help us out. They make sure we are doing work on time. We have fun. We go to movies on Friday. Teachers take us to Golden Corral, skating, field trips, swimming, lots of different things. There is nothing we don't like. We like everything.

The Comparison School:
Students' Perceptions of Teacher Expectations:

Teachers expect everything from us. They want us to respect them. She tells me if I respect her, she will respect me. She told me to shut up to my face, and I said, 'you shut up.' They tell us to shut up and that we are disrespectful and I tell them to shut up too. I like school when we have substitutes. I like school because it's boring at home. I like school to get our education, and get out of school. We use computers, we communicate in different ways. I don't like anything about the teachers; maybe a little bit; I like them sometimes. She gets mad at some students and takes it out on all of us.

Parent Involvement:

Teachers' Perceptions: Teachers at the high achieving school stated that parental involvement is strong and valued, and they provided many examples. This was not the case at the comparison school where teachers indicated that they cannot trust parents or depend upon parents to participate in school activities. Although there are numerous parental activities at the comparison school, and the parents who are involved consider

themselves to be a vital part of the school, it is obvious that teachers and the principal do not perceive the quality of parental involvement to be a strong show of force at the school.

The High Achieving School:
Teachers' Perceptions of Parent Involvement:

Parents hold classes. They are in the building all the time. They coach, volunteer on playgrounds, volunteer in classrooms, volunteer for testing, work in whatever their specialty areas are. They work with teachers; PTA, field trips. They pray for the school; they have father/child breakfasts each year, fund raising, have rap sessions, parent support groups, speak in assemblies. They are willing to come in and be a part of the team. There is a lot of talking and sharing. Parents and teachers practice preventive measures as a team. Parents and teachers are encouraged to look for problems and solve them as a team. The staff listens to parents' concern. Parents also support students whose parents are not involved, as well as continually call and support those parents who are not involved.

The Comparison School:
Teachers' Perceptions of Parent Involvement:

Parents are not involved enough; some are involved very nicely, but others are not. Parents kind of hold us at a distance, they sign up for conferences and activities, but a third will not show up. Sometimes the reliability for parents is not there. You can't always count on parents so I do it myself. It is a problem to get parents involved.

Parents' Perceptions of Parental Involvement:

Parents at the high achieving school indicated that they are informed and involved. They described in detail the ways in which they participate. In contrast,

parents at the comparison school did not elaborate or explain their involvement in the school.

The High Achieving School:
Parents' Perceptions of Parent Involvement:

Parents are here every day, and sometimes on the weekends. The school involves us in every way. We go out and ask other parents to come. We support the school and we support each other, and most of all, we support all the children. We go to classes; help teachers out; work here at the school; substitute, volunteer in classes, hold classes, do whatever is needed. Teachers can call on us whenever they need us. We were trained to volunteer and substitute. Teachers and principals' doors are always open to us. We feel welcomed. This is our home away from home. It has always been this way. Somebody is always asking us to come to the school. We can sign in and come into the classrooms anytime. The administration lets us come and be a part of the school. We don't feel hesitant at all. Everyone is welcome here. When you are here, you can't tell the teachers from the parents; everybody seems to be doing the same thing. The staff, teachers, and administration are open and make you feel welcomed. We get other parents involved; We bring friends - "Tell a Friend/Bring a Friend." All the children know our names. The teachers let us know that we can come anytime to observe, and they want us to come often. It's a neighborhood thing. It has been "welcome, come in; no appointment needed." They wanted us to be a part of the children's education. It has always been this way. Dr. C. was here 16 years and he always said, come on in. Dr. C. was "the rock" (amen, amen). His door was always open. He still sees anyone from our school at any time. When I first started coming to the school, I was here so much in the classrooms,

in the halls until I felt awkward, like I was intruding, but the teachers and principals assured me I was here and I belonged here. The only thing that could make it better is a new school building, better parking.

Home is an extension of the school. We have a study routine. We ask questions; we reinforce; no training needed because we are here at the school so often and we know the teachers' routine, so we just keep it going Homework is a must. We post the homework on the refrigerator, and we just work it out and reinforce. They must practice, practice, practice. We don't just help our children. We help all children. It takes a village. We also take responsibility for other children - not just our own. We are here for all the children. We adopt a child, feed the children, take other children home, help out with homework.

The Comparison School:
Parents' Perceptions of Parent Involvement:

Everything is in place. We have a good parent coordinator. Parents are the heart of the school. We come to support our children and our teachers.

Students' Perceptions of Parent Involvement:

Students at the high achieving school provided vivid demonstrations of the numerous ways in which parents are involved at the school. In contrast, students in the comparison school perceived parent involvement in a negative sense. They believed that teachers use parent involvement as an opportunity to get them in trouble with their parents.

The High Achieving School:
Students' Perceptions of Parent Involvement:

Our parents come to school a lot; every day. They support the school - PTA, B honor roll, assemblies, May Day. They come to see how we are doing. They come to graduation, parades, carnivals. Parents are here a lot. They come to teachers' conferences.

The Comparison School:
Student Perspectives of Parent Involvement:

Teachers call our parents and tell them bad things on us. My parents come to school when I'm bad, or when I have an asthma attack. Teachers call our parents and lie on us. They get us in trouble. Teachers need to look at what they be doing to us. We don't do things to them for the fun of it. She thinks she's going to tell me to shut up. She tells me if I respect her, she will respect me. She told me to shut up to my face, and I said, 'you shut up.' They tell us to shut up and that we are disrespectful and I tell them to shut up too.

Resources:

Teachers' Perceptions: Teachers' responses from both schools indicated they have the resources they need to meet their goals and objectives. Teachers who responded at the high achieving school indicated that they aggressively and successfully pursue any additional resources they need to meet the needs of their school. In contrast, respondents at the comparison school stated they basically have what they need, but there is a need for additional activities and outside contact for the students.

The High Achieving School:
Teachers' Perceptions of Resources:

We are creative; we take what we have and be creative; the principal goes out and makes sure we get what we need; we beg a lot; we accept help from the community and churches and parents - all of which - beg for us. We need more space; the school is expanding.

The Comparison School:
Teachers' Perceptions of Resources:

We do not always have enough resources, although we have lots of resources. We have the "DARE" Program, the Navy, etc. We get a little crowded and are limited on thesauruses and some supplies. Most important, however, is that these kids need some contact - outside contact. It's so expensive to rent buses to take them on trips, etc. Many of these children do not leave their blocks. We need to be more connected with the businesses to get corporate sponsors, partnerships, etc. We need mentors to come in to give students some personal experiences and connections. Colleges could be more involved.

Parents' Perceptions of Resources: Parents at the high achieving school indicated they are aware of the schools' needs, and they know how to obtain the support they need. They expressed their desire for such things as a larger lunchroom and more lively environment. In the comparison school, parents expressed a greater need for various resources. They described a long list of things the school needs, but has not presently attained.

High Achieving School:
Parents Perceptions on Resources:

Our policy is to ask and it shall be received. We just go around asking for

support, and we get plenty. We stay visible. We can use more money, a larger building, a larger lunchroom, a brighter and more lively and colorful environment, need landscaping, teachers' lounge, more parking spaces, dictionaries, computers, on-line capabilities, and teachers need more assistant teachers.

The Comparison School:
Parents' Perceptions of Resources:

We need more teachers, space, sport activities, men to volunteer, insurance, uniforms, transportation, sponsors, coaches, and more involvement from churches and the community.

Students' Perceptions of Resources:

Students' perceptions at both schools indicated that they have enough books and school supplies and that they utilize the library and computers on a regular basis.

The High Achieving School:
Student Perceptions of Resources:

We go to the library and check out books and have accelerated reading. We have everything and everything goes on at this school. The PTA has a store and they sell supplies. If we don't have much money, we go to the PTA store.

The Comparison School:
Student Perceptions of Resources:

We go to the library to get out of class and use computers.

Summative Analysis of the Data:

The pattern of responses at the high achieving school suggests the school has

created a culture that reflects the following characteristics: positive attitudes, high self esteem in students, trust, collaboration, a strong sense of group efficacy, commitment and responsiveness to students needs, flexibility and diverse teaching methods, and a belief that all students can learn. Responses indicated that students, teachers, parents and the principal are committed, as well as capable of doing whatever it takes for students to achieve. The consistency in responses further suggests that the school uses a collaborative, as well as a holistic approach which encompasses the entire school community in accomplishing its mission. Essentially, in all the correlate areas, participant responses were consistent with indicators of school effectiveness.

In contrast, responses from participants in the comparison school reflected perceived constraints in students' learning, some pessimism in teachers, a lack of parental and community support, and community connectiveness. These factors, according to the research literature, are characteristics of lower achieving schools (Weinstein, Madison and Kuklinski, 1995). In terms of the correlates of school effectiveness, the responses at the comparison school reflected various inconsistencies in focus group responses based on indicators of effectiveness. Participants expressed the beliefs that the adverse conditions in the neighborhood have placed limitations on the school and the students.

An analysis of all the patterns and emerging themes which appeared through all focus group responses and interviews is summarized below.

Emerging Themes and Patterns in the High Achieving School:

Strong Leadership: A review of the data indicates that the high achieving

school has benefitted from a dynamic, innovative, and flexible leader who was "undeterred by the traditional boundaries of the principal's role" (Finn-Stevenson and Stern, 1996). The formal principal, based on all accounts, was strongly committed to the school. Consistent with the literature on effective schools, it was revealed that the school leader, who provided leadership for sixteen years at the high achieving school, was successful in framing goals and setting the standards for performance which led to a productive work environment at the school.

Some of the most significant work on the part of the former principal appeared to have been in mobilizing and empowering parents, teachers and the entire school community. This includes obtaining political, parental and financial support for the school. Other contributions which have been credited to the former principal include: before and after school programs, early childhood classes, school uniforms, same-sex classes, and an overwhelming sense of teacher accountability and high teacher expectation. As previously indicated, the high achieving school was chosen as the first national CoZi school site because of the leadership role of the former principal who was "nontraditional and undeterred in his approach to success." The principal had a reputation for holding teachers totally accountable for student achievement.

In the focus groups, parents and students made it clear that they missed the former principal, although they liked and respected the present leadership. It was obvious through their statements that they felt the former principal had been their "rock," and that he was the key to the success of the school. They indicated he was the key to getting parents involved in school activities. Although teachers as a group did not mention the

role of the former principal, one teacher did talk extensively about the positive role of the former principal during an informal conversation. The teacher recalled how the former principal invited both teachers and parents to question him during his interviews. He went on to say how the former principal made it clear that if he wanted to work at the school, he would have to like children, like people, and be able to relate well to parents and students, and smile a lot.

Teacher Expectations: Teachers stressed high expectations for students to succeed regardless of the obstacles. They explained that they worked "collaboratively" and "enthusiastically" to provide motivation, morale and nurturing for students. It was obvious that teachers in the high achieving school had a strong sense of "group efficacy." They believed they could make a difference. They also were flexible and committed to the students, as well as the school mission. They appeared to have found a way to thrive on their mission and the many activities, programs and procedures for curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Parent and student comments corroborated teachers' comments. Some of the parents' comments indicated that teachers were dedicated, committed, and "heartfelt." Students' responses further corroborated teachers' perceptions. When asked "what their teachers expected of them," students expressed in unison, "to do our best and pass the test." Students' responses further indicated they were eager, confident and enthusiastic about learning. They liked and respected their teachers and principals who looked out for them. It was obvious that students felt safe and secure. Overall, students' perceptions indicated they had a lot of school pride. They knew what was expected of them, and

were motivated to learn and succeed.

In response to the wide range of duties and responsibilities (time on task and opportunities to learn), teachers indicated they felt challenged and motivated as a team which collectively utilized their resources to accomplish their goals. In terms of time and task and opportunity to learn, the teachers and principal also stressed their use of flexible approaches and their commitment to student achievement.

Parental and Community Involvement, Education, and Empowerment: Responses regarding "parent and community involvement," in the high achieving school, demonstrated the extent to which the school has been able to succeed. Responses from each group in the high achieving school suggested that the school had embraced and empowered parents and the community. The school had provided numerous opportunities for parents and community members to be involved with the school, and had educated and trained parents to understand and respond to the school's needs.

Parent responses indicated confidence in the fact that the teachers and the principal would take care of their children. The parents also perceived that they, themselves, represented a strong, visible, and valued presence in the school. Parents were in and out of the school every day, and some volunteered as workers in the school on a daily basis. Teachers' responses corroborated these statements, as teachers indicated that they are able to depend on parents to be available and responsive whenever the need should arise.

These themes, which were consistently expressed at the high achieving school, suggest the school has gone far and above the norm in empowering, valuing, and

utilizing community resources. The result appears to have been the creation of a powerful group that has been instrumental in responding to the school's needs.

Mission: Consistent with the literature on effective schools, teachers in the high achieving school articulated their mission and stressed their commitment to student achievement, the school's mission, collaboration, teamwork and consensus. Furthermore, teachers showed enthusiasm as they spoke extensively about their responsibilities, their commitment to student learning, focusing on the whole child, collaborative and team efforts, and mutual support.

Students, as well as teachers demonstrated understanding of the principles and guidelines of their school. This was demonstrated when students asked if they could recite their school creed and sing their school song for the researchers.

Emerging Themes and Patterns in the Comparison School:

Within the comparison school, the emerging themes and patterns revealed the following: 1) Inconsistencies in focus groups responses based on indicators of school effectiveness in the correlate areas; 2) The impact of an unstable community which has led to a high mobility rate amongst students; 3) Neighborhood Disconnectiveness, where there appears to be little parental and community involvement.

Participant Responses Were Often Inconsistent with Indicators of School Effectiveness: In comparison to the high achieving school, the responses from participants at the comparison school were not as positive or confident in most of the correlate areas. Additionally, their responses were often inconsistent with the theoretical indicators of school effectiveness. For example, student responses were very negative in

the areas of teacher expectation and leadership. Comparison school teachers' responses were also not as positive in the areas of teacher expectation and time on task and opportunity to learn. The comparison school participants expressed an awareness of the resources they needed, including parent involvement. However, there were few indications of any proactive means which have been taken to secure those resources.

Relative to parent involvement, there was no evidence that the school had been able to involve the parents and community to a significant degree. Teachers did not necessarily value parent involvement, and parents did not attempt to list the ways in which they were involved. Students perceived parent involvement in a negative sense. In terms of leadership and high teacher expectations, some of the students' perceptions clearly indicated they did not feel respected or valued by their teachers and principals. They, in turn, did not feel the need to show respect.

Additionally, there was no indication that teachers, parents and students were knowledgeable of their school mission. Unlike the high achieving school, they did not recite or speak specifically about their school mission. When they did speak about their mission, the focus appeared to be on structure and roles, instead of the students. Some of the respondents spoke of controlling and managing problems and people. Additionally, they did not specifically speak of including people and developing systems to help respond to the diverse needs of the school and community.

Finally, the comparison school provided more generalized responses (bits and pieces versus concrete responses). As such, there were no indications of a defined culture in the school. Although their responses showed they were aware of their needs, the

necessary requirements to develop important relationships and resources appeared to be lacking.

The Impact of an Unstable Neighborhood, and Student Mobility: Responses in the comparison school also reflected a belief (by parents specifically) that the school is limited by adverse social conditions in the neighborhood. It was the belief by parents and teachers that such conditions have led to a high mobility rate among students, where students, along with their parents, constantly move for various reasons during the school year (Mao, Whitsett and Mellor (1998).

Many of these concerns centered around the existence of two homeless shelters which are located in the vicinity of the school. According to respondents, these shelters are frequently used by parents who are homeless. When these parents move into the shelters, they send their children to the comparison school for a two to three month durations. However, when their stay within the shelters is over, the students leave the school, and the cycle starts over. This type of continuous rotation, according to the respondents, is difficult for students and teachers. There are too many inconsistencies, and too much moving throughout any given school year.

The research literature confirms that low income families who live in economically disadvantaged areas are those who are more likely to change schools frequently. These families may move frequently to take advantage of more affordable residences as they become available, or to find alternative housing if they have been evicted. The students involved maybe at a particular school for only a few months before they move again (Mao et al, 1998).

Research also indicates that mobile students are most likely to score significantly lower on standardized achievement tests than more stable students. As such, test scores are likely to reflect badly on their school's overall performance ratings. High student mobility also tends to affect the students who are left behind in that their friends and peers constantly change (Mao et al, 1998).

At the comparison school, these two factors -- adverse social conditions and student mobility -- represented a definite pattern as revealed in responses of teachers, students and parents. These concerns were also reflected in the documentary data regarding student mobility. Sources indicated that approximately 46 percent of the comparison schools' students move or change school within a given school year. This is in comparison to a 26 percent mobility within the high achieving school (see chapter 3, table number 8).

Neighborhood Connectiveness: Adverse neighborhood conditions made it difficult for the comparison school to connect to parents and the neighborhood. For example, although the school had many parental activities on record, it was obvious that the teachers and principals did not view parent involvement as a positive or reliable factor in the school. The principal indicated there needed to be more accountability on the part of parents to get their children to school as well as following other rules and procedures. When parents were asked to share ways in which they were involved with the school, they did not elaborate. Parents did indicate, however, that the instability in the neighborhoods made it difficult to solicit help for the school from churches and businesses.

Another example could be seen in the negative ways in which students at the comparison school perceived parental involvement. When asked how their parents were involved with the school, students indicated that teachers contact their parents to lie about them or get them in trouble. In sum, there were no indications that the comparison school has been able to effectively empower or involve the community.

This is an important implication for the comparison school, as research stresses the importance of schools to their environments, as well as the impact the school can have in empowering the school community. Bullard and Taylor (1993) suggest that schools should move into a parent partnership model, and not a professional/client relationship. This is obviously a difficult function for a school where there are so many barriers in the community, and so many transient students. The research does suggest that in some urban areas, efforts are being made for "cultural responsiveness" (McDermott, et al., 1998). These efforts include setting up nonprofit after-school programs in housing projects. The goal has been to be responsive to urban students by indoctrinating student teachers, as well as other educators, in the lives and communities of these students.

Between School Patterns: Safety in the Neighborhoods: On the factor of safety, responses revealed similarities between the two schools. Parents from both schools showed concerns about the safety of the neighborhoods, particularly for the safety of the children on their way to school.

Chapter V

Conclusions

Based on the perceptions of participants in two low income schools, this study has presented findings which show differences between a high achieving and lower achieving school. Accordingly, the following conclusions have been drawn regarding how the high achieving school has been able to successfully provide for the educational needs of its students.

1. The school that is more likely to approach its tasks from a *holistic* direction and thus mobilize its resources, is likely to generate higher achievement.
2. The school that can create a shared *culture*, involving a strong identification among parents, students, and teachers is likely to generate higher achievement.
3. The school that promotes a strong *sense of efficacy* among teachers, students, and parents is more likely to generate higher achievement.
4. The school that promotes *students' self confidence and self esteem* is likely to generate higher student achievement.
5. The school that is *flexible, responsive, and uses varied methods to respond* to student needs is more likely to generate higher achievement.
6. The school that has a high degree of *commitment* from teachers, students, principal, parents and community is likely to generate higher student

achievement.

1. **The holistic approach:**

In comparison to the lower achieving school, the high achieving school focuses not only on the educational needs of disadvantaged students, but also on the social and environmental needs in the community as they affect students and their households. Finn-Stevenson et al (1996) indicate that such a program "is based on the belief that children's success depends on a number of systems working together: the family, the educational system, the child care system, and the health care system, . . . thus making the school the 'hub' of an inclusive community" (Emblige, 1998; Comer et. al, 1995).

As such, the holistic approach strives to bring several important components together in a caring school environment, relying on collaboration that attempts to involve all adult stakeholders in the community. In such a community based model, the neighborhood is seen as an important source for networking social service agencies and private community-based initiatives that benefit students and their families. The approach is based on the idea that positive and nurturing relationships are essential to successful schooling (Comer, Zigler, Stern, 1995).

This factor of community support was indeed obvious in the pattern of responses in the high achieving school. In comparison to the lower achieving school, the high achieving school evidenced collaboration amongst the principal, teachers, parents and neighborhood groups by stressing strong community involvement. In their own words, the groups voiced the following comments relative to the school's holistic approach. The principal stated: "To create a positive and successful environment, all parts of

the environment must fit; i.e., making people feel welcome to come in and be a part of our school." In corroboration of a holistic approach, the teachers stated: "We are a CoZi school; we focus on the physical, and mental development of the whole child. We use a holistic approach. The child must be ready to learn, and everyone - parents, community and churches - is involved in knowing and implementing our mission." Parents stated, "We are here every day; and sometimes on the weekends. The school involves us in every way." Students stated: "Our parents come to school a lot; every day. They support the school."

Schmitz (1994) expressed that a holistic approach is important because children in impoverished, urban areas often are unable to escape the deprivation of poverty. The obstacles these children face are "rooted" not only in the schools, but also in the neighborhoods and homes from which they come. Additionally, the problems of poverty, illiteracy, drugs, homelessness, family instability, poor health care, and crime prevent many adults from being able to positively shape the lives of their children. It is difficult, according to Potter and Potter (1998), for adults who themselves, are uneducated, and unemployed to provide the kind of motivation and support needed for their children to succeed academically.

Therefore, a system is needed to motivate adults as well as students. Such a system would empower their lives, and help them to develop skills which would allow them to take advantage of important opportunities. Some researchers have contended that until such a system is in place, it is unlikely that disadvantaged students will be able to fully reap the benefits of education. Emblige (1998:11) indicated that " . . . for those

children who come from severely disadvantaged areas, talk about high academic standards in education can be beside the point." What these children need first, according to Emblige, is for someone to address their non-educational needs. In this way, they can be prepared and focused when they are in school. This means being able to anticipate the needs of disadvantaged students. Just as important, however, is being able to anticipate the needs of the whole child in meaningful ways.

Programs that have generally been successful in schools have had several key elements in common. Such programs include: delivery and evaluation of local social service options, involvement of pertinent social service providers, coordination and integration of the various services, development of after-school programs and follow-up efforts to make sure the children in need and their families have access to the program, the empowerment, and self esteem of the people in the communities, family counseling, after school enrichment and recreational programs, community building, and leadership skills where poor families are taught to help and sustain themselves (Emblige, 1998; Potter, 1997; Comer,1993).

Chesler (1998:123) indicates that when these types of programs are available in a friendly and familiar atmosphere, "even troubled clients who participate may not feel stigmatized." For example, like the parents in this study's high achieving school, people come out of the experience with greater self esteem and a more positive social and political outlook. Therefore, an added benefit in linking schools with parental and community-based initiatives is that there will be a steady stream of parents in the school, thus creating opportunities for steady interaction between parents and teachers. Parker,

Kelly and Sanford (1998) concluded that the problems facing urban schools cannot be solved until efforts are made that require these kinds of comprehensive approaches to connect families and communities with schools.

In the high achieving school, parent respondents indicated that such efforts have been made. They voiced the following comments:

> The school involves us in every way. Somebody is always asking us to come to the school. The administration lets us come and be a part of the school. When you are involved, you get what you want out of the teachers. The only thing that would make it better is a new building.

Findings from this study also support previous research findings which indicate that the school leadership is most often responsible for training and motivating school personnel to establish and maintain these types of collaborative processes. In reference to the former principal who provided leadership at the high achieving school for 16 years prior to the 1997/1998 school year, parents and students both expressed how much they missed him. The parents said: "We miss Dr. C. He was here for 16 years and he always said, 'come on in.' His door was always open to us. He was the rock."

The former principal of the high achieving school considered the parents and the community to be the most significant factors contributing to the academic success of the school. Important, is that the former principal personally recruited parents, community members, churches, businesses, and politicians to become partners with the school. He held workshops, and brought valuable resources into the school to help empower parents and other community members. In his own words, he voiced the following comments:

> Our parents were our greatest resources. Not only did we go out and recruit parents into our school, we held workshops to empower them. Parents must know they are needed, they are welcomed, and they have power. Not only did we let the parents know we needed them, we also went to the community (the churches and politicians) and told them how important the community was to the school.

More importantly, the principal provided leadership for the school to allow it to become the first in the nation to participate in the national family and community CoZi model. The school was selected as the first site for this national program because of the academic progress and successes it had already accomplished. It was also noted, however, that the school was selected because of the outstanding reputation the principal had already attained. He had a reputation for being someone who was committed to academic excellence, and "undeterred by tradition."

Like other holistic methods, the CoZi Model is the process of facilitating various aspects of the school to meet the multiple needs of families. The focus is on communities that are responsible for the education of poor and disadvantaged students. It addresses the needs of children from before birth until 12 years of age, and it reorganizes the school to make it a community center that supports the optimal development of all children. As one of the focus group parents from the high achieving school put it, "it is a community thing. Everyone is made to feel like a special part of the process." Additionally, parents indicated they feel most comfortable at the school; everybody makes them feel welcome, and it has always been that way. One parent indicated: "When

I first started coming to the school. I was here so much in the classrooms, in the halls, until I felt awkward, like I was intruding, but the teachers and principals assured me I was here and I belonged here, and now, we are involved in everything."

From a different perspective, Easton (1997) described holistic education as an incorporation of the following features: 1) a theory of child development based on meeting the needs of the whole child; 2) a theory of teacher self development where teachers are required to keep pace with the changing needs of the students; 3) a core curriculum that integrates artistic and academic work; 4) synchronized teaching methods which are balanced with the child's capabilities; 5) integration of teaching and administration, where administrative leadership is shared by the entire faculty, and 6) building the school as a broad-based network of support for students, teachers and parents.

Accordingly, responses at the high achieving school suggest that not only does the school have a vision that is inclusive of the entire school community, the school is committed to doing whatever it takes to make sure students are given every opportunity to learn. When asked about their school mission, some of the teachers indicated the following:

> We very enthusiastically focus on effective outcomes and use our passion for teaching to focus on the whole child; whatever the child needs, the child gets. Our learning environment is interesting, and flexible. Subjects are intermingled and connections are made to real life, and teaching is related to the students' backgrounds; we collaborate; we use a cooperative, team player approach which is flexible and is designed so that teachers do whatever it takes to make sure children are learning. We combine classes

> when necessary, and get much support from the principal. Discipline is minimal and there is much support. We are quick to utilize our resources and to ask for help from cooperative and supportive peers and leaders.

In reference to building a community of networks, the teachers and the principals also explained that they go by their students' homes on a regular basis, including the summer breaks, and they involve themselves in the community. Also important were comments by teachers and the principal which indicate they encourage students to deal with neighborhood issues. This coincides with research which emphasizes the need for school personnel to understand the lives of children and their parents outside of school. Additionally, such actions are often the keys to getting students to perform in school. Gordon (1997) suggests that beyond formal education in the schools, there should be opportunities for community education for the uplifting and improvement of the community to allow people to find their own voices and reclaim their self worth.

2. **School culture:**

In comparison to the lower achieving school, the high achieving school has developed what some researchers have defined as a "shared orientation" based on a strong school culture. Indications of a strong school culture were detected throughout the school, based on the following observations: a clear understanding of the school's mission, a strong school identity, trust, openness, a sense of belonging, and a sense of direction. These features appeared to hold the school together and gives it a distinctive identity (Miskel and Hoy ,1987; Peterson, 1997). These observations are based on the consistency of responses given by focus group respondents. The responses confirmed

that all the key participants in the school shared similar values, attitudes, beliefs, expectations, and perceptions.

Some authors have argued that the success of many organizations is based more on the values and norms of the organization than technology. Additionally, it has been indicated that culture affects every aspect of an organization (Miskel and Hoy, 1987). Selznick (1957) states that a strong culture infuses a sense of values into an organization which, in turn, gives that organization its distinct identity.

This study lends strong support to the importance of school culture. In comparison to the lower achieving school there was indeed a caring spirit in the high achieving school. There was also a genuine sense of intimacy among teachers, the principal, parents and students. Such qualities, according to Miskel and Hoy (1987), and Peterson (1997), are representative of the holistic approach which promotes a community of equals who work cooperatively on common goals to guide organizational behaviors. Additionally, the patterns of responses at the high achieving school were indicative of a cooperative spirit where relationships are nurtured and developed. Participants' comments included the following:

> We work as a team, we collaborate, we share, we focus on valuing people, we enthusiastically do whatever it takes to help students succeed, we work together; we do our best, we build and nurture relationships, there is a positive school spirit.

The various features of culture which were expressed by participants in the high achieving school were consistent with some of the indicators used by other researchers. For example, Leithwood, Leonard and Sharrat (1998) speak of culture as the result of the

collective actions of individuals. Individuals recognize and respond in various ways to patterns in the environment, involving issues such as community, and commitment. In this way, school performance based on group interaction, extends beyond the natural sum of the contributions that would have been made on an individual basis.

Key phrases from participants at the high achieving school included the following: collaborative and collegial support; the sharing of ideas and working together to accomplish their goals; mutual support, respect among teachers, students, and parents; respect for colleagues' opinions; a willingness to share in innovative methods and processes; school pride; student self esteem, and a strong focus on the needs of all students. Teachers at the high achieving school expressed the following:

> Our guiding principles are consensus, collaboration and no fault. Our learning environment is interesting and flexible. Subjects are intermingled. We combine classes when necessary, and get much support. There are mutual respect, trust, openness, and honesty. Students are eager and enthusiastic. We are flexible. We utilize our resources and ask for help from cooperative and supportive peers and leaders. We change, we adjust; we do whatever is necessary.

Other indications of a strong cultural identity were evident in the high achieving school when on separate occasions, teachers and students gave comparable responses when they were asked questions. For example, when asked about their school mission, all teachers responded in unison, saying: "We very enthusiastically focus on effective outcomes, and use our passion for teaching to focus on the whole child; whatever the

child needs, the child gets." When students were asked what their teachers expected of them, they responded in unison, saying: "Do our best and pass the test." Other symbolic terms used by students and teachers included, "I can, I will, I must." Additionally, one group of students repeatedly asked the researcher if they could recite their school creed, and sing their school song. When they did, it was obvious that each one was knowledgeable, enthusiastic and proud of their school. Students' responses also showed that they have good feelings towards their teachers. They felt that the teachers and principals looked out for them and provided high levels of morale, motivation, support, and caring. Additionally, these students indicated they liked being in their school, and that other students wish they could attend.

Furthermore, responses in the high achieving school demonstrated consensus regarding school-wide participation in innovative ideas, problem solving, and the ability to take care of business. These perceptions in the high achieving school were consistent with findings of other researchers. For example, it has been expressed that the culture of an organization has to do with the way things are done, and the belief and norms members of an organization tend to share concerning what they need to do or should do to accomplish their goals. It is the effectual involvement of parents, students, teachers, staff and community members who are informed, knowledgeable, and are very comfortable in the school environment. Culture also encompasses the acceptance of a pattern of behavior which has been put forth for the entire school community. The presence of strong cultural identity in an organization not only encourages and fosters certain abilities, it also discourages and suppresses negative ways of behaving (Anastasi,

1982; Levine and Lezotte 1990).

3. **Group efficacy**:

Within the high achieving school, and especially among teachers, there appeared to be a strong belief that everyone is willing and capable of achieving a certain high level of performance. The literature on effective schools refers to such confidence and positive attitudes as a sense of collective efficacy, i.e., teachers, students, and parents who believe in themselves and their ability to accomplish their goals and succeed together.

Peterson (1997) indicates that efficacy is multifaceted and is formed through a strong socio-collegial environment which pertains to both social and business interactions. In addition to such factors as collegiality and strong leadership, Peterson indicates that efficacy involves high academic expectations of students by teachers and administrators. Additionally, Peterson sees a reciprocal relationship between school climate and efficacy. Climate is affected by a sense of efficacy, and efficacy is affected by the school climate. Examples of efficacy in schools were described by Peterson to include the following: 1) Teachers spend more time monitoring and checking seat work and leading students to correct responses through questioning techniques; 2) Teachers are willing to wait and probe for student responses and provide more reinforcement by correct student responses.

Bandura (1997) indicates that collective efficacy centers on a group's operative capabilities to organize and execute actions required to attain a given level of group performance. This type of action, according to Bandura, equips participants with a

strong sense of belief, and enables individuals to produce valued outcomes. Bandura further indicates that although student characteristics, including socioeconomic status may have some direct bearing on achievement, achievement is largely influenced by teachers' beliefs about their ability to motivate and educate students.

Overwhelmingly, in the high achieving school, the teachers' responses portrayed high levels of efficacy and confidence. Their responses indicated their belief in themselves and their abilities to accomplish their goals. Their attitudes were very positive. Responses showed that they were focused on the whole child, and the individual needs of their students.

A high level of confidence was also evident when the teachers spoke of their school resources. One of the teachers indicated, "Teachers are efficacious." Another commented, "We do whatever it takes to get the job done; whatever the child needs, the child gets." In terms of resources, the principal and some of the teachers agreed to the following:

> We are good at asking; our philosophy for getting resources is ask and you shall receive. We find the right people, make connections and get a lot of support. We are creative; we take what we have and be creative.

In addition to teacher efficacy, a sense of confidence was also evident in parent and student responses. Based on the perceptions they shared, students appeared secure, positive, and competent. Their sense of security seemed to have been based on knowing their parents, teachers and principal were all there for them. They knew they were

expected to do their best, and they appeared confident in their ability to meet that expectation. They indicated they were treated with respect, they liked their school, they knew there were very specific expectations of them, and they were motivated, as well as ready, to achieve.

Parents responses also evidenced feelings of being in control, knowledgeable, and being a strong force within the school. Based on their responses, they too appeared to be self motivated in their roles, and it was obvious that they felt that they make a tremendous difference in the lives of their children, as well as in the lives of all students and the entire school community. Parents indicated, "We are involved in every way. We are here every day, and we don't just help our children. We are here to help all children. It takes a village. We take responsibility for all the children."

This particular finding within the high achieving school as it relates to efficacy is consistent with studies which have found efficacy, and particularly teachers' sense of efficacy to be one of a few variables that have been consistently linked to student achievement. Moreover, the literature on school effectiveness has revealed that efficacy is related to the attitudes and behaviors, as well as organizational functioning and decision making, school culture, organizational capabilities and performance (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 1992). Other studies have revealed that these types of expectations and beliefs in and by students, teachers, and schools appear to be embedded in high achieving schools (Weinstein, Madison and Kuklinski, 1995).

4. **Student self esteem:**

Students at the high achieving school appeared to have a high level of self esteem

as revealed by statements of confidence in their abilities, and readiness to learn. Based on their responses, they clearly believed in themselves and felt a strong sense of community. The literature describes these factors as important components in creating high self esteem in students (Martin, 1996).

Blake (1992) indicates that helping children develop self worth and self-esteem is perhaps the greatest gift we can give them. This is because self esteem and self confidence are vital to the educational success of students. Students' self esteem in the high achieving school was obvious. Their pattern of responses indicated they felt comfortable in school, and were confident in the fact that they were actively learning. When these students were asked what they liked about coming to school, they responded:

> We feel good at school. We like being here. We get compliments about how we are doing in our work; teachers make sure we are doing our work on time. We play and joke around; teachers are funny and they are good teachers. Other students wish they could be here. We are here to learn so we can get our education and get a job when we grow up.

They also indicated they were lucky to be at their school where the principal skipped rope with them. They were pleased that the teachers and staff take them to special events and to their homes on the weekends. In sum, the students' self images seemed to have been strengthened by the way they were treated at school.

Babbie (1995) suggested that our self image which, in part, determines how we behave, is largely a function of how others treat us. Additionally, Babbie explains that

how others treat us is often based on the expectations they may have in advance. Anastasi (1982) indicated that an individual's self description becomes of primary importance because it affects how one regards himself and how events are perceived by the individual. Anastasi further states that the ability to form a positive self image is related to age, intelligence, education, and socioeconomic level. These are some of the reasons that various researchers have found self esteem to be directly associated with student achievement, and critical to the lives of minorities.

Stachowski (1998) indicated that the lack of self esteem is related to a variety of problems in school. Similarly, Miskel and Hoy (1987) described the lack of self esteem as a feeling of helplessness and separation from the larger society. In such situations, students are unable to envision future outcomes. Consequently, the atmosphere of the school has much to do with how well the student is able to relate and identify with the learning environment. An open and friendly environment motivates students to identify with the school and to work toward their own potential.

Building self esteem, according to the literature, can be as simple as giving students individualized attention, and empowering them through some leadership and decision making skills. Students must be provided the necessary help to establish their own personal image. They must be able to identity through cultural awareness and a sense of community. In order for these things to happen, it is critical that parents be involved. There must also be the presence of community activities that can help instill pride in one's self and in one's cultural surroundings (Oldenquist, 1985; Anastasi, 1982).

In the high achieving school, teachers and the principals purposefully worked to

help students meet daily challenges. This was accomplished by allowing time for students to talk about neighborhood problems. The teaching staff would go to the students' homes, and adopt students for the purpose of helping them. Teachers and the principal would make sure that parents and other community members identified as a special part of the school. They expressed the following comments:

> We take the time to look at the whole child. Students are expected to be respectful and outstanding citizens. We give students time to learn and deal with their personal issues and understand their backgrounds and experiences. We let them talk and deal with concerns as long as it takes and then we get on with learning. The child can rise as high as you expect him or her to rise. The minimal is not acceptable; I have high expectations for all my students, and I expect them to have high expectations of me.

Oldenquist (1985) emphasized that self esteem results from competence and a sense of community and not from the mere stroking of emotions and feelings. Oldenquist (1985) further indicated that children feel good about themselves when they feel they are learning things, acquiring skills, and participating with others in serious structured activity.

5. **Commitment:**

Critical to school effectiveness is the role that teachers and educators play to better assure that students are learning. It is this type of commitment which appeared to be one of the differences in the high achieving school. For example, numerous accounts pointed to the commitment on the part of the former principal of the high achieving

school. In his flexible approach, he put together a plan to recruit, train and empower parents who were also committed to the goals of the school. He recruited churches and other community members to provide support. Additionally, he provided the time for training and development of teachers. To accomplish this, he was successful in getting community members to substitute in the classrooms so that teachers could participate in other activities. The principal indicated that he would go to the neighborhood anytime of the day or night to let the people know how vital they were to the school.

Commitment on the part of teachers was also obvious in the high achieving school. Teachers were committed to each other and the school mission, as well as to student achievement. They emphasized collaboration and team teaching to meet the needs of students. According to the respondents, "Everyone is involved in implementing the school mission." They went on to say, "We do whatever it takes. We focus on the physical and mental development of the whole child. There are life long lessons, making sure learning goes on. We collaborate; we are a team; we learn from each other. Our philosophy is 'I can, I will, I must'!"

These perceptions were consistent with research findings which show that in effective schools, everyone is strictly accountable, for performance. Teachers commit to seeing that students are paying attention in class, that the work is meaningful, and that students are meeting the requirements for homework. Excuses are neither made nor tolerated (Levine and Lezotte, 1990).

Purkey and Novak (1998) indicate that to meet the needs and challenges of education, there must be an ethical commitment on the part of teachers and educators.

Such a commitment would call on everyone to realize the potential of students. This involves genuinely caring for students, and meeting their individual needs. In such an atmosphere, there is a realization that every person involved in the education process makes a positive or negative difference in the lives of students.

Educators, according to Purkey and Novak (1989), should commit to supporting each other to the same extent. Not only must teachers be committed to students, they must commit to the school mission, and work on implementing goals and objectives. Such support can be provided through collaboration and teamwork. Hess (1998) quoted Wagner (1994) who made the point that commitment to urban education may be more valuable than money. Hess (1998) also made the point that efforts toward meaningful reforms require time, energy, and commitment.

Peterson (1997) used the work of Butler (1995) who had found that commitment grows through processes such as shared leadership, collaborative efforts, and school improvement teams. These processes are important to school culture. School culture, in turn, is important to productivity and student achievement. Some of the benefits of teamwork and collaboration include the involvement of teachers and the school staff in goals setting, planning, development and implementation; cross training, team teaching, and an inclination into cultural activities, such as the celebration of achievement.

6. **Flexibility:**

Teachers in the high achieving school testified that their learning environment was sufficiently flexible to allow teachers to do whatever it takes to make sure students are learning. Subjects were linked to real life situations, and time on task was different

every day to incorporate a flexible, team teaching approach.

The former principal of the high achieving school believed in flexible approaches. He had a reputation for being "non-traditional" and "undeterred" in his efforts toward student achievement. Additionally, in describing her school, the current principal in the high achieving school described exciting, busy, free-flowing and flexible days. She also indicated that as school leader, she encouraged and used open-ended approaches as long as objectives were being met. In contrast, the principal in the lower achieving school spoke of structure, monitoring students, managing by walking around, visiting classrooms every day, and making sure everything flowed in a certain direction.

Bullard and Taylor (1993) contend that teachers must break from old molds and take chances on new and different ways to help students learn. Providing students such an opportunity to learn, according to Levine and Lezotte (1990) requires the focus to be on the individual student as the prime beneficiary. Such an approach requires an array of available options to respond to the diverse needs of all students. This type of environment requires flexible classes which are less formal, but more intense and focused. Teachers must be empowered to handle flexible classes through such processes as training, staff development, team work and collaboration.

Research has shown that in effective schools, teachers are trained to allow the flexibility necessary to respond to the needs of all students. Marshall (1997) explains that educators must exhibit concern and understanding for people's well-being and a sensitivity to individual circumstances. Some researchers have suggested that a sense of caring should be viewed as an ethical commitment by teachers to realize human potential

to enable students to develop self concept and grow through different activities (Marshall et al., 1997). In essence, it has been expressed that students need meaningful school experiences. Students who are deprived of a good school experience generally feel a sense of void and neglect which can lead to feelings of "lack of control" in their lives.

Recommendations for future study:

This study supports the importance of continuing to explore the role of the principal as a leader in the educational setting (Hallinger, Heck, 1996, Levine and Lezotte, 1990, Gronn, Ribbins, 1996). As indicated by Santiago (1998:17) "... the type, size, location, and history of an organization strongly influence decisions of leadership type, but so does the personality, experience, background and goals of the leader. Styles may need to be adapted and remain flexible both within and between organizations." These are important implications, considering the multifaceted role of school leaders, who must find the style and structure best suited for the school environment.

Additionally, the findings from this study lend strong support to additional study involving the correlates of school effectiveness. Levine and Lezotte (1990) stressed the importance of future research in determining if the correlates should be viewed as prerequisites for attaining high levels of student achievement or if they simply are interrelated with many other particulars which make schools successful.

This study also supports additional research involving the parents, teachers, students and principals in individual schools. It is important to understand their perceptions, as well as their actual roles on relevant factors of school effectiveness. In the present study, these were the people who provided valuable insights for understanding

some of the factors which contribute to successful schools. Their voices have shaped this study and their perceptions have substantiated previous research which stressed the importance of people who believe in themselves and their abilities. Their voices have also provided insight into the characteristics of teachers, parents and staff who make sure that "whatever the child needs, the child gets."

There is a need for future research to focus on how different school environments impact reform efforts. Specifically, there is a need to know the impact of such factors as neighborhood characteristics, student mobility rates, school culture, parental and community support, and leadership. For example, it is important to determine where, and how, actual neighborhood conditions and housing patterns affect academic learning. This study's high achieving school is located in a stable public housing community, and is solidly connected to its neighborhood. In contrast, the lower achieving school is located in a very mobile and unstabled community. Therefore, it would be advantageous to study neighborhood structures and patterns to see the impact of various factors which may affect the academic achievement of students. An important consideration is that regardless of the neighborhood conditions, there is a continuing need to expand parental and community involvement.

APPENDIX

Appendix "A"

Indicators of School Effectiveness:

The questions for this study were based on the correlates of school effectiveness as gleaned from the literature (see Chapter 2). As such, indicators for each correlate were used extensively in helping to devise the research questions, as well as in the analysis process. The following section outlines the specific indicators for each correlate.

Indicators of the Correlates of School Effectiveness

Safe and Orderly Environment:
Indicators:

1. Sense of belonging, participation, and school pride
2. Sense of safety and freedom from physical harm
3. Discipline and rules; preventive programs
4. Attractive surroundings

Clear and Focused Mission:
Indicators:

1. Mission statement that is known, clearly communicated, and easily understood
2. The focus is on academic goals, student learning and achievement
3. There are objectives in each subject area
4. Curriculum, instruction and assessment are aligned with teaching objectives
5. Teachers hold students accountable for their work
6. Materials and supplies are adequate for students' abilities.
7. Teachers accept responsibility for student learning
8. High level of teacher commitment of their time and energy to help students succeed

Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task:
Indicators:

1. Time for learning is considered critical
2. There is adequate time for essential skills: classes start quickly and purposefully: assignments are ready
3. Mastery for all students is emphasized; there is a no non-sense approach to learning
4. No wasted time in passing between classes, recess, etc.; minimal interruptions
5. Students required to bring pertinent materials to school each day

Monitoring:
Indicators:

1. Achievement standards are set and frequently reviewed
2. Criteria for assigning grades are consistent
3. There are various varieties of testing programs
4. Measuring of progress is frequent and ongoing
5. Interpretive analyses - teachers know how to interpret, use and communicate test results
6. Test results are used for goal setting

7. The assessment of the curriculum and evaluation of instruction are frequent and ongoing
8. There is immediate feedback to students on homework and assignments

Leadership (principal):
Indicators:

1. The principal has a vision that is the motivating force for all actions
2. The vision for the school is clear, easily understood, desirable, energizing, and shared by all
3. The principal has created a sense of community to implement the vision for the school
4. The principal has created a sense of trust in the organization and is able to engage others in the action that is necessary to implement her vision
5. The principal is visible and can often be seen wandering around and paying attention to what is happening, making frequent contact with students and teachers
6. The principal and staff work together for constant renewal through development of all people at the school to attain and maintain success and prevent stagnation
7. Instructional leadership from the principal is clear, strong, and centralized.
8. The principal provides excellent customer service and public relations for the school
9. The principal is constantly involved in innovation
10. The principal models, leads, educates, mobilizes, inspires and enables the entire school community to act
11. The principal is unique, courageous, and is not afraid to take risk or challenge the process in order to accomplish her purpose

Parent Involvement:
Indicators:

1. Most parents are actively involved and committed to positive relations with the school
2. The school develops and presents various opportunities for parent participation and involvement
3. Teachers communicate with parents on a regular basis.
4. Communication with parents is clear, effective, and frequent
5. Most parents rate the school as superior
6. Parents and teachers work together to monitor homework, and provide discipline when necessary

7. The principal and teachers assess the needs of parents and students on a regular basis

Teacher Expectations of Students:
Indicators:

1. Students are eager and enthusiastic about learning
2. There is a positive school spirit
3. Teachers believe they are responsible for helping students achieve identified standards in each subject area.
4. Teachers believe students can achieve in each subject area.
5. Despite students' home backgrounds, teachers feel they can successfully teach 90-95% of their students
6. Students try hard to succeed in their classes
7. Students are acknowledged and rewarded for academic improvements and achievements

Resources:
Indicators:

1. The school has enough inputs to function effectively (i.e., people, money, materials, libraries, before and after school programs, physical space and arrangements, textbooks, maintenance and repairs)

Appendix "B"

Focus Group Questions:

The interviews began with focused questions for each group. All questions were based on the correlates of school effectiveness. The focus group questions were designed to obtain perceptions of the participants regarding school effectiveness. Similar measures and indicators have been used in previous research on this subject (Holdaway, 1997; Zimmerman, 1990; Bacon and Evers, 1994). The focus group question guides follow:

Focus Group Question Guide
Students' Questions

Safe and Orderly Environment

1. Complete this sentence: "When I walk into my school, I feel _____."
2. Do you feel safe at your school? Why? Why not?
3. Why do you feel safe (or unsafe)?

Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task:

1. What do you do in your classrooms?
2. What subjects do you like best?
3. What subjects take the longest time for teachers to teach?
4. Do you sometimes stay after school to participate in programs? What kinds of programs; i.e. after school tutoring? Do you like participating in these programs? Why/Why not?
5. In the past week, how many times, if at all, did you stay to participate in after school programs? What programs? What did you like best about the program(s)?

Leadership:

1. Do you get to see and talk to the principal at your school?
2. What is she like?
3. What does she do?
4. What does she talk about?

Parent Involvement:

1. Do your parents come to your school? When? Why? How often?
2. Does the teacher or principal contact your parents? Why?
3. During the past school year (or past month) how often, if at all, did your mother or father come to your school?
4. Why did they come - school conferences, PTA?

Teacher Expectations:

1. What do you like best about being in school?
2. What do you like least about your school?
3. What do you like best about your teachers?
4. What do you like least about your teachers?
5. What do you think your teacher(s) expect from you at school?
6. Does your teacher have different ways of teaching? Which is your favorite?
7. Do you feel comfortable in class? Why? Why not?

Resources:

1. Do you like going to the library? Why? Why not?
2. Do you always have enough books, paper, art supplies, etc.?

Focus Group Guide
Teachers' Questions

Safe and Orderly Environment:

1. How safe is your school? (Please explain).

Clear and Focused Mission:

1. What is your school's mission (i.e., goals, objectives)?

Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task:

1. Describe a typical class session in a key subject area?
2. Are you satisfied with the amount of time you have for key subject areas? What would make it better?

Monitoring of Student Progress:

1. How well do your systems for monitoring student progress work?
2. What would make it better?

Leadership:

1. Describe the leadership style or the leadership role of your principal?
2. What are her strengths?
3. What are her weaknesses?

Parental Involvement:

1. Describe the ways in which parents are involved at your school?
2. Describe the ways in which the school involves parents?
3. Describe ways in which you involve parents?

Teacher Expectations of Students:

1. What do you expect from your students?
2. How do you help students meet your expectations?

Resources:

1. Do you have the resources and supplies needed to maximize student learning (i.e., are you satisfied with the library, textbooks, space, supplies, repairs)?

Focus Group Guide
Parents' Questions

Safe and Orderly Environment:

1. Do you feel your children are in a safe and clean environment when they are at school? Why or Why not?

Leadership:

1. Describe the leadership role or the leadership style of the principal?
2. What are her strengths?
3. What are her weaknesses?

Parent Involvement:

1. How often do you meet with teachers?
2. Is this enough time?
3. Are there any other ways in which you are involved with the school? Explain?
4. How does the school involve you?
5. Are you satisfied with your involvement with the school?
6. What would make it better?

Teacher Expectations:

1. How satisfied are you with your children's experiences in school?
2. Do you like the teachers who are teaching them?
3. What do you like best?
4. What would you change?
5. Do your children like some teachers better than others? Why?

Resources:

1. Does this school have the resources/supplies needed to do a good job? Explain.

Interview Guide:
Key Contacts (Principals)

Safe and Orderly Environment:

1. How well does your system for keeping your environment safe work?
2. What would make it better?
3. What contributes to making this school safe and orderly now?

Mission:

1. What are the mission, goals and objectives of your school?
2. How are they implemented?

Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task:

1. Describe a typical day at your school?
2. How do you make sure that students are mastering the key subject areas?
3. Are you satisfied with the amount of time devoted to the key subject areas?
4. What would make it better?
5. What are some of the factors that make teaching work well now?

Monitoring:

1. What are the methods used to monitor teacher performance and student progress?
2. Are you satisfied with these methods?

Leadership:

1. How do you see your role as principal?
2. What is your leadership philosophy?

Parent Involvement:

1. How do you go about involving parents at your school?
2. What would make it better?
3. What factors or methods make it work well now?

Teacher Expectations:

1. What factors contribute to students performing well at your school?
2. Are there barriers to student performance in your school?
3. How do you see creating a positive and successful environment in your school?

Resources:

1. Do you have the resources you need to operate effectively? Please explain.

Appendix "C"

A Comparison of School Characteristics and Programs:

Multiple sources of evidence were used for this study. The following section provides a comparison of school characteristics and programs for both the high achieving school and the comparison school.

Selection of the Schools: A Comparison of School Characteristics and Programs:

Both the high achieving school and the comparison school have participated in a national school reform program based on the belief that children's success depends on a number of systems working together: the family, the community, the educational system, the child care system, and the health care system. All these systems are integrated together, making the school the "hub" of an inclusive community (Finn-Stevenson and Stern, 1996). As such, both schools administer and implement school development programs which are focused on all aspects of child development, including physical, social, emotional, language and intellect.

It should be noted, however, that the high achieving school was the first school in the nation to be selected to participate in the program. Its selection was based on the fact that the school had demonstrated a commitment to early childhood education and to many of the other principles of the program. Selection was also based on characteristics of the principal of the high achieving school who had a reputation for being innovative and undeterred by the traditional boundaries of the principal's role (Finn-Stevenson and Stern, 1996).

The comparison school was later selected to participate in the program, because like the high achieving school, it was a low income school located in a disadvantaged community that served about 500 African American children. Therefore, the selection of

these two schools for this current research provided an opportunity to compare the high achieving school with a similar school on a wide range of indicators.

National Recognition: Over the past five years, the high achieving school has gained a solid reputation for being an outstanding urban elementary school and has been recognized by Redbook Magazine (1995) Time Magazine (1996) and ABC News (1997) as one of the best elementary schools in America.

Parent and Community Involvement: The high achieving school has been nationally recognized for its model parental/community involvement program which provides for various parent involvement activities and volunteer programs. Sources from ABC News reported that parents have taken involvement to new levels in this "almost 100 percent minority population of students, where the majority are on free and reduced lunch programs." It was found that parents are indeed plentiful at this school. They work as substitute teachers, interview prospective teachers, host father/child banquets, supervise the holding ground in the in-school suspension rooms, staff before and after school programs, serve on advisory and management teams, conduct health and fitness classes for other parents, help school staff with hall monitoring, cleaning, and tutoring, and help one another and the community through prayer groups, and other parent support groups (Watson, 1997).

In the comparison school, there have also been efforts to involve the parents and the community. However, the comparison school has not been able to involve parents at a significant level. Participants' perceptions regarding the lack of parent and community involvement are outlined in the analysis of focus groups responses (Chapter IV). Both

schools also have Title I Parent Centers and parent educators who work to enhance parental involvement.

Before and After School Programs: Both schools have before and after school programs to enhance students learning in key subject areas, as well as to provide for social interactions and recreational activities for the students. In the high achieving school, the teachers, principals and staff provide transportation from school to home in order for students to be able to participate in these programs. In the comparison school, there is also a home assistance program after school with transportation provided.

School Uniforms: Although both the high achieving and comparison school have school uniform programs, the high achieving school has a mandatory policy for uniforms, whereas, the comparison school has a voluntary uniform program.

Same Gender Classes: Both schools have same gender programs. In the high achieving school, the program is more extensive - boys and girls are separated for instruction in reading, math, science, and social studies. In the comparison school, boys and girls are separated in some, but not all, key subject areas.

Resources and Expenditures: Both schools are relatively comparable in terms of total resources and expenditures. In Table nine, which follows, there are differences in the ways the two schools utilize their resources. These differences could be based on the number of students in the schools (536 in the high achieving school vs. 493 in the comparison school). The high achieving school has an operating budget that is $112,000 more than the comparison school. The high achieving school also spends approximately $91,591.00 more on personnel than the comparison school. Additionally, the high

achieving school spends almost twice as much on equipment than the comparison school - $25,138.00 vs. 13,394.00.

Table Nine

The Needs Assessment Study: Percent of Favorable Responses Regarding School Resources and expenditures

	Percent of Favorable Responses	
	High Achieving School	Comparison School
Personnel	$2,146,612.00	$2,045,021.00
Supplies	47,848.00	45,939.00
Operations and Maintenance	54,324.00	60,405.00
Equipment	25,138.00	13,394.00
Substitute Allowance	8,363.00	9,072.00
Other	32,097.00	28,948.00
Total	$2,306,019.00	$2,193,707.00

(Source: Needs Assessment Questionnaire, Norfolk Public Schools, 1995)

Needs Assessment Questionnaire - Attitudes and Perceptions:

In 1995, both the high achieving and the comparison schools participated in a detailed quantitative study entitled "*The Needs Assessment Questionnaire (NAQ)* batteries." With the exception of being a quantitative study, the Needs Assessment Questionnaire focused precisely on the same factors - the correlates of school effectiveness - that this current qualitative study focuses on. Like the current study, the 1995 study also was based on perceptions of teachers, parents, students, and staff at the study schools. Item analysis was based on the number of favorable responses for each school with a mean score for each response by school. It should be noted, however, that this information compares the high achieving school to the comparison school, as well as all the other low income schools in the same school district, all of which share similar demographics. For the purpose of this research, this information has been used in conjunction with the focus groups data to help establish a benchmark for comparisons.

Based on these analyses from the Needs Assessment Questionnaire, the high achieving school responded more favorably than all other low income community in the same school district in most correlate areas with the exception of "Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task." The areas where the high achieving school seemed to have had the widest margins of favorable responses were: 1) Parent and Community Involvement; 2) School Leadership; 3) Teacher Expectations, 4) Resources, and 5)Safe and Orderly Environment. Based on a review and comparative analysis of the Needs Assessment Questionnaire, the results are summarized and discussed below.

Parent and Community Involvement: Results of the quantitative Needs

Assessment study (1995) showed that parents, teachers, students and staff at the high achieving school rated their school more favorable than the other low income schools. The differences were in terms of community involvement, parent volunteers, and a strong parental involvement program overall. In each case, the responses for the high achieving school were nine to twenty-seven percentage points higher in most items on this correlate.

Dynamic Leadership: Results of the needs assessment study further indicated that the leadership at the high achieving school was perceived to be stronger. Teachers at the high achieving school rated leadership from the principal to be stronger (79 percent favorable responses from teachers at the high achieving school, in comparison to 66 percent favorable responses at the comparison schools).

High Teacher Expectation: Results of the needs assessment questionnaire further indicated that teachers at the high achieving school expressed that their success in teaching students depended on their own efforts and not on outside forces. In this correlate area, teachers at the high achieving school responded favorably at a rate of 89 percent in comparison to the comparison schools' where the average favorable response was 53 percent. Additionally, in this correlate area, students at the high achieving school indicated (by a 94 percent favorable rate that they were praised for good school work). At the comparison school, students' favorable responses were 71 percent.

Table Ten

The Needs Assessment Study: Percent of Favorable Responses Regarding Parent and Community Involvement

		Percent of Favorable Responses	
		High Achieving School	Comparison Schools
The Community is involved and supports the school			
	- Teachers	97%	80%
	- Parents	84%	73%
	- Students	78%	67%
I act as a volunteer	-Parents	72%	48%

(Source: Needs Assessment Questionnaire, Norfolk Public Schools, 1995)

Table Eleven

The Needs Assessment Study: Percent of Favorable Responses Regarding School Leadership

		Percent of Favorable Responses	
		High Achieving School	**Comparison Schools**
Principal provides clear, strong instructional leadership	-Teachers	79 %	66%
The principal lets the staff know when they have done a good job	-Teachers	95%	83%
The principal handles parent relationships tactfully and with understanding	-Parents	92 %	81%

(Source: Needs Assessment Questionnaire, Norfolk Public Schools, 1995)

Table Twelve

The Needs Assessment Study: Percent of Favorable Responses Regarding Teacher Expectations

		Percent of Favorable Responses	
		High Achieving School	Comparison School
The number of low income students who are retained is proportionate to the number of other students	-Teachers	85%	57%
My success in teaching students depends on my own efforts	-Teachers	89%	53%
Students are praised for good work	-Students	84%	71%

(Source: Needs Assessment Questionnaire, Norfolk Public Schools, 1995)

Resources: The Needs Assessment Questionnaire also indicated that teachers and students at the high achieving school expressed more favorable responses which indicated they were satisfied with the resources their school had. These included the library, adequate space and physical arrangements, and instructional programs which extended beyond the school building.

School Mission: Students appeared also to be more knowledgeable of the school mission. Results show that 82 percent of student respondents at the high achieving school responded favorably, in comparison to 67 percent of respondents at the comparison schools. A high percentage of students at the high achieving school also responded that they were more serious about their education (61 percent at the high achieving school in comparison to 50 percent at the comparison schools).

Monitoring: Based on the needs assessment questionnaire, it was also indicated that parents at the high achieving school are more focused on monitoring of student progress.

Safe and Orderly Environment: In the "safe and orderly environment" correlate, it was indicated that students, teachers and parents at the high achieving school felt better and more secure about their school environment.

Table Thirteen

The Needs Assessment Study: Percent of Favorable Responses Regarding School Resources

		Percent of Favorable Responses	
		High Achieving School	Comparison Schools
Instructional programs extend beyond the school building			
	-Teachers	85%	57%
	-Students	77%	61%
Supplies and materials are available in sufficient quantities	-Teachers	66 %	45%
The school has an adequate library			
	-Teachers	82%	60%
	-Students	85%	66%
There are always enough books for everyone	-Students	76%	57%
The library is open before and after school	-Parents	64%	48%
The school building has adequate space and physical arrangements	-Parents	80%	63%

(Source: Needs Assessment Questionnaire. Norfolk Public Schools. 1995)

Table Fourteen

The Needs Assessment Study: Percent of Favorable Responses Regarding School Mission

		Percent of Favorable Responses	
		High Achieving School	Comparison Schools
The theme "Believe-achieve-succeed" is on display throughout the school			
	- Students	82%	67%
Students are serious about their education	-Students	61%	50%

(Source: Needs Assessment Questionnaire, Norfolk Public Schools, 1995)

Table Fifteen

The Needs Assessment Study: Percent of Favorable Responses Regarding Monitoring

		Percent of Favorable Responses	
		High Achieving School	Comparison Schools
Regular assessment of student learning is a standard classroom practice	-Parents	48%	32%
I am informed of results of standardized tests my child takes	-Parents	100%	84%
Students receive instruction in test taking.	-Students	88%	62%

(Source: Needs Assessment Questionnaire, Norfolk Public Schools, 1995)

Table Sixteen

The Needs Assessment Study: Percent of Favorable Responses Regarding Safe and Orderly Environment

	Percent of Favorable Responses	
	High Achieving School	Comparison Schools
Student behavior is not a problem		
- Teachers	58%	47%
- Students	45%	26%
-Parents	55%	36%
Teachers respect students		
-Students	92%	54%
-Parents	83%	64%

(Source: Needs Assessment Questionnaire. Norfolk Public Schools. 1995)

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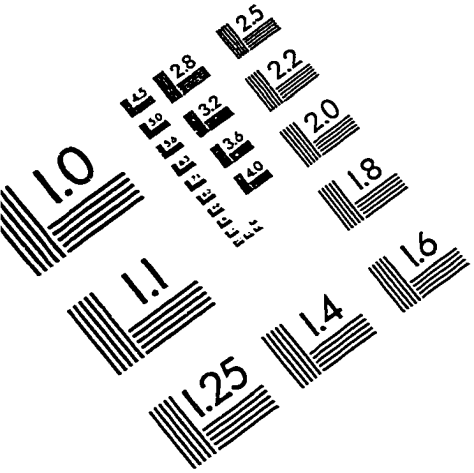
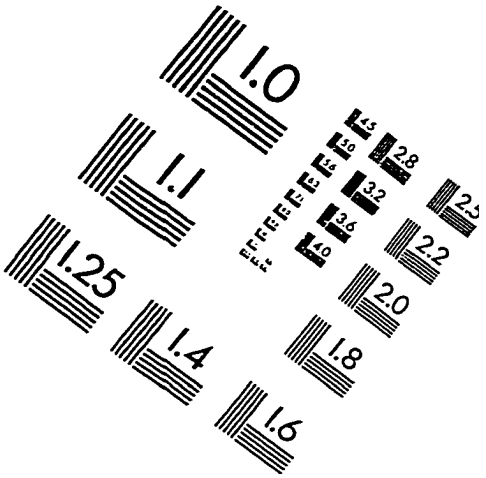
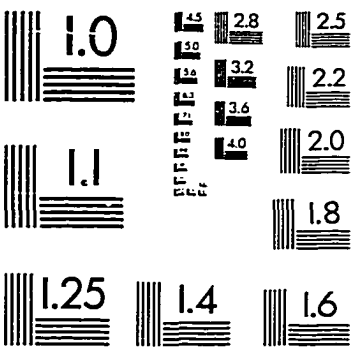
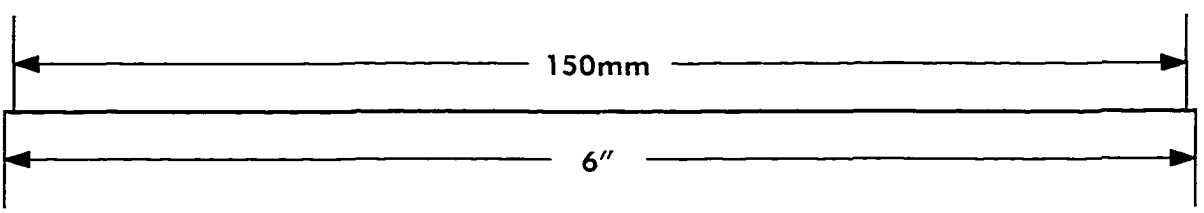
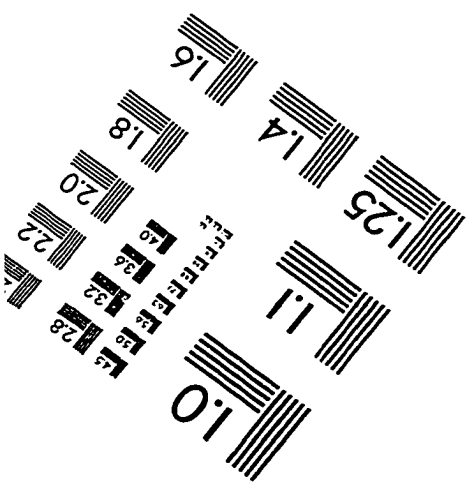
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)











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